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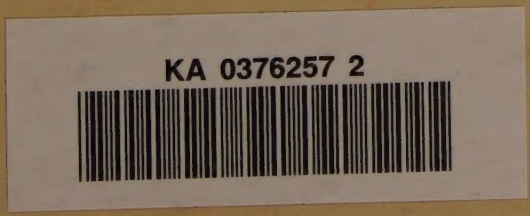

THE RIDDLE OF RUSSIA

WORKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

PORT ARTHUR. THE SIEGE AND CAPITULATION

THE PASSING OF THE SHEREEFIAN EMPIRE

WITH THE TURKS IN THRACE

EXPERIENCES IN THE GREAT WAR

DESPATCHES FROM THE DARDANELLES

THE TRAGEDY OF CENTRAL EUROPE

THE UNCENSORED DARDANELLES

THE RIDDLE OF RUSSIA

by

E. ASHMEAD-BARTLETT, C.B.E.

With an Introduction by

THE RT. HON. THE EARL OF BIRKENHEAD, P.C., D.L.

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INTRODUCTION

BY

THE RT. HON. THE EARL OF BIRKENHEAD, P.C., D.L.

MR. ASHMEAD-BARTLETT is one of the outstanding war correspondents of the day and the wittiest man of my acquaintance. These two qualities peculiarly fit him to describe conditions in Bolshevist Russia to-day, as he has seen them. The combination endows him with a sense of proportion most necessary to anyone who seeks, after what is admittedly not much more than a leisured glance, to appreciate a situation as it really is, and to bring home to readers in England and America the violent contrast between life in the "Soviet paradise" and in our own more fortunate communities.

His training as a war correspondent, moreover, has taught Mr. Ashmead-Bartlett the methods and the channels by which the essentials of a situation may be gained. A war correspondent, if he be competent, does not preface his description of a single battle in a campaign with a detailed history of modern warfare; nor does he think it necessary to examine at length the family affairs of the generals commanding; but many writers who have published accounts of their experiences in Bolshevist Russia—I read them all—seem to have felt an impulse to recapitulate, at great length and usually with inaccuracy, the growth and development of the Russian Revolutionary movement, and to offer, on

1092.

insufficient data, a criticism of the Tsarist Government, Rasputin's influence, the Kerensky interregnum, and other turning-points of the Russian catastrophe. While all these matters must naturally concern the serious historian, and will form an important portion of any classical work upon the Bolshevist Government, they emphatically do not concern writers whose sole task, on their own admission, is to describe their personal experiences in Soviet Russia and to set down what they have seen with their own eyes. Mr. Ashmead-Bartlett, almost alone among recent writers, has avoided these defects.

His book is a vivid and most readable account of present-day Moscow and Petrograd as these appear to a trained literary observer. His claim to write without political bias is amply justified ; he has clearly done his utmost to praise the Bolshevists for such things as deserve praise. Indeed, his account of a visit to a Bolshevist prison strikes me as palpably in need of a footnote. The prison which he describes would appear to offer its inmates a so much more comfortable and freer life than is vouchsafed to the non-criminal Russians outside, that the reader may feel surprised that everyone in Moscow does not seek to qualify for internment in it. Yet there are a hundred authentic pictures of prison life in Russia to-day which show that the one visited by Mr. Ashmead-Bartlett is an exception. Such horrors reign in the others as are scarcely to be comprehended, and would certainly be unendurable, by the ordinary European mentality. The explanation is perhaps, first, that the Bolshevists show a very natural indulgence to murderers and treat them with courteous fellow-feeling; secondly, that this prison is one of the show places to which foreign visitors

are conducted. The reader will notice that Mr. Ashmead-Bartlett is careful not to argue from the particular to the general, and that, in the prison chapter as elsewhere, he insists upon the difficulty of making an independent investigation.

I very cordially recommend this book to the innumerable readers who are inclined to wonder "what life is like in Russia to-day." They will gather more from these pages, skilfully and wittily written, than from dozens of more pretentious volumes.

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THE RIDDLE OF RUSSIA

CHAPTER I

BOLSHEVISM, 1919—1929

I WAS travelling in the Balkans, when I suddenly received a cable from the Editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, saying—"Return at once have arranged for you to go to Russia." I received the news with mixed feelings—exciting expectations mingled with some misgivings—for this was not my first experience of Bolshevism and the Bolshevists. Ten years before, in 1919, I had found myself almost alone in Budapest, when Bela Kuhn, and his satellites from Moscow, turned out the weak Karolyi administration—corresponding to the Kerenski government in Russia—and seized the reins of power in a country wearied and weakened by the ravages of the world war. I witnessed the economic break-up of Hungary within six weeks of the Bolshevists usurping power; and the flight of the majority of the upper and middle classes to neutral territory. This was a critical hour, when the fate of Eastern Europe hung in the balance. The Conference of Paris was in full session, and the arrival of this revolutionary movement at the gates of Vienna seriously alarmed the Big Four, and jeopardized all their plans for the reconstruction of the boundaries of Europe. The Central Powers, broken by defeat, were ripe for almost any new experiment; the people, weary, half-starved, and poverty-stricken, had lost all faith in the old governments which had brought them to ruin. In the extreme of their

dejection and agony they were prepared to give trial to new doctrines, like Communism, which they would never have considered as a possible solution of their difficulties under normal conditions. Thus, if Bolshevism spread over Austria, Bulgaria, Germany and Italy, the Treaty of Versailles would never have been signed or, had it been, would at once have become a mere "Scrap of paper"; the League of Nations would have been still-born. In great haste General Smuts was despatched to Budapest to negotiate with Bela Kuhn, to discover his plans, and to stem, if possible, the western march of Communism.

When General Smuts arrived on his special train, he was met at the station by Lieut.-Commander Freeman Williams, the British Naval Representative, who had remained in Budapest; by Mr. Macartney, who was acting as the representative of *The Times*, and by myself. All other foreigners had left some days before. We were able to give the General a full résumé of the actual situation before he met Bela Kuhn. This Smuts mission came to naught, but it served a useful purpose in so much as it enabled us to obtain some valuable information as to the future plans of the Bolshevists.

It was Bela Kuhn's paramount desire to make use of the Smuts Mission, in order to strengthen his own position, by making it appear, in the eyes of the Hungarian people, that he had received the official recognition of the Conference of Paris as the *de jure* and *de facto* governor of Hungary. He therefore organized a resplendent banquet at the Ritz Hotel, to which he invited General Smuts and his staff. Unfortunately he counted his chickens before they were hatched, and it came as a disagreeable

social rebuff to the Communist Leader, when the General refused this invitation, and even declined to leave his special train and visit the town.

What were the unhappy Bolshevists to do? The table was laid, the dishes and the wines were ordered, and the guests had been bidden to the feast. Something had to be done to save their face. They therefore proclaimed that the banquet was never intended for the General and his staff, but had been got up in honour of the foreign press, of which Macartney and myself were the sole representatives in Budapest. Pressing invitations were sent to us. We consulted General Smuts as to whether it would be advisable to attend. He replied, "There is no reason why you should not go; you are not in an official position like myself. It is possible you may learn many matters of great interest and importance." So we accepted.

This banquet, the most remarkable it has ever been my lot to be present at, was held in the inner hall of the Ritz Hotel, at one long table, but unfortunately Bela Kuhn, as head of the government, decided to absent himself now that General Smuts and his staff had refused to be present. But, with the exception of Bela Kuhn, almost all the prominent leaders, their satellites, and the Red journalists of Budapest were present, including Boehm, the People's Commissary for Propaganda; Pogany, the People's Commissary for War; Professor Argoston, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs; Kunji Hercoq, Chief of the Press Bureau at the Foreign Office, one of the leading journalists who helped to establish the Republic; and a crowd of others, all rank Communists, either from con-

viction, or from a desire to exploit the general chaos prevailing in the country.

The real interest lies in the fact that every one of the "Comrades" became very much the worse for drink, the entertainment lasting from 8 p.m. until 3 a.m. downstairs, and then for another hour, when drink had run out, in my rooms upstairs; and in their cups they disclosed the innermost secrets of their souls, and revealed all the plans for the propaganda of Bolshevism throughout the whole of Europe. Enormous quantities of Hungarian champagne were consumed, in addition to every other kind of Hungarian wine, and no one can claim to have put away more than Boehm, the Commissary for War, who did most of the talking throughout the evening. Even the sullen Pogany seemed to shake off the ghost of Count Tisza, which is said to haunt him, drank freely, and became quite cheerful.

Boehm, Pogany and Co. made no concealment of their plans. Boehm, who acted as the chief spokesman, said:

"We are going to turn all our neighbours into Bolshevists. We shall start with the Czecho-Slovaks. Don't you see what a wonderful position geographically Hungary is in, as the starting place for Bolshevism? We are surrounded by discontented people all ready to adopt our principles. The Czecho-Slovakians, once we have kicked them out of Hungary, will become Bolshevists right away. For the moment, we shall not bother with Austria. They are already Bolshevists, but owing to the material difficulties connected with their food supply they have told us they must wait a bit longer before throwing in their lot with us. After Czecho-Slovakia then it will be

the turn of Rumania; in fact, that country may adopt Bolshevism at any minute. Bulgaria is also quite ready to throw in her lot with us. Yugo-Slavia will follow as a matter of course, and then we shall arrive in a solid body on the frontiers of Italy. In three months Italy will come over to us. Then, on the eighth of this month, there will be held the combined meeting of all the Soldiers' and Workmen's Councils in Berlin. We have absolutely certain information that Germany will adopt Bolshevism. Probably on that day, according to their usual custom, the Entente will make some impossible demand of Germany in the way of indemnities; that will drive all those who might otherwise be opposed to Bolshevism into its ranks. But in any case, there is not a particle of doubt that the whole of Germany will follow our example. We have the most precise information on this point. Then what becomes of your Entente and its boasted powers and Wilson's Fourteen Points? You will find the whole of Eastern and Central Europe united against France, England, and the United States. The victory will no longer be with you, but with the proletariat of all those countries that adopt Bolshevism. How long do you think France will hold out? Why, we shall eat up France in a few months, and then will come the turn of England. Do you realize that all our English propaganda is already printed? None of you seem to realize how well organized the forces of Bolshevism are. We have every scrap of propaganda ready and printed for Czecho-Slovakia, Rumania, Bulgaria, England, Italy and Germany. No country will be able to hold out against us."

I have only quoted certain passages, showing the

Bolshevist programme for the conquest of Europe, from the document I was able to draw up for General Smuts, on the following day, which he took with him to Paris.

It records the extent of the ambitious dreams of Moscow in 1919, which were never destined to be realized ; firstly, because the Rumanians, assisted by the Counter-Revolutionary Army, were able to drive the Bolshevists out of Hungary ; secondly, because of the complete collapse of all Russian industries when the workers took over the factories ; and thirdly, because the wars between the Bolshevists and the White Russian Armies placed them on the defensive for several years. But at the time, no one knew what course events would take, and the fear of a Bolshevist advance on Vienna created terror throughout Austria and the neighbouring states of the Little Entente.

The majority of the Hungarian aristocracy and officers of the old army were forced to flee to neutral territories, and many sought an asylum in Vienna. Here a counter-revolutionary movement was organized. It came to the knowledge of the leaders that the Bolshevists had sent enormous sums of money to the Hungarian Legation in Vienna, to be used for propaganda in Austria and neighbouring countries. It was decided to seize this under the very eyes of the Viennese police. On the night of May 2 a band of fifty officers raided the Hungarian Legation in the Bankgasse, and seized it. Over one hundred and thirty-five million Hungarian crowns fell into the hands of the Counter-Revolutionists ; at the same time the Bolshevist Minister, Dr. Bulgar, and his whole staff were seized and imprisoned.

Bela Kuhn was furious when he learnt the news and

threatened reprisals against Austria. But his wings were clipped by the loss of nearly all his sinews of war. The Austrian police made a pretence of arresting some of the leaders in this raid, but they were quickly released. However, the government decided that the counter-revolutionists could no longer be allowed to operate from Austrian soil. The improvised government under Count Bethlen, with all the officers and volunteers, therefore moved to the town of Szeged, in Southern Hungary, and with the money taken at the Bankgasse, organized a small army under Admiral Horthy.

Shortly afterwards, the Rumanians invaded Hungary from the east without asking the permission of the Big Four; Horthy's army moved up from the South; and the Bolshevist leaders were forced to flee, or were arrested. Admiral Horthy was appointed Regent—a position he has held ever since. The Rumanians were animated by no altruism. Although professing to act through fear of having Bolshevists so close to their frontiers, their real motive was to seize Transylvania, and present a *fait accompli* to the Big Four in Paris. In this they were successful. In the Treaty of the Trianon, Rumania exacted her full price for " services rendered to the Entente in checking the onward march of the Bolshevists." Hungary was dismembered, and the question of Hungarian minorities in Transylvania, Yugo-Slavia, and Czecho-Slovakia remains the most pressing problem in Europe to-day, and is a constant menace to peace in the future.

Bela Kuhn returned to Russia somewhat in disgrace, after his *débâcle* in Hungary. He was subsequently entrusted by his chief with the congenial task of " cleaning

up the Crimea," after the failure of the Wrangel and Denikin campaigns. His cruelty and exactions have become a byeword, even in Russia. He is said to have shot over ten thousand White Russian officers and sympathizers. Even Lenin was disgusted with his conduct, and, as far as I know, he has not been employed in any important position again. He was last heard of a year ago, when he was arrested, imprisoned, and expelled from Vienna.

After what I went through and witnessed in Hungary, in 1919, I have been obsessed ever since with a righteous horror of Bolshevists and their principles. I witnessed the economic break-up of a formerly prosperous country, within two months; the destruction or cessation of all industries, and the inauguration of a frightful tyranny, which enslaves the whole nation in shackles of iron, while ostensibly pretending to bring freedom and social equality to all people. What would I find in Russia? This question constantly recurred to my mind. Would I find Communism changed or modified, and now a constructive, instead of a destructive force? Would I find tyranny abolished after the Bolshevists have enjoyed eleven years of power? Would I find a people really free, prosperous and happy, and the shackles of iron discarded forever? Or would I witness once again a repetition of all those horrors and evils which Bela Kuhn inflicted on the unhappy Hungarian people during his few months of misused power?

On account of my connexion with events in Hungary in 1919, I did not expect to be granted a *visa* to enter Russia, or to be received there as a *persona grata*. In fact,

I had never even applied for one, and I was taken completely by surprise when I learnt that the Soviet Government had decided to let me in. The only explanation is this: The Government feels keenly the absence of English Press representatives in Moscow. The Soviet leaders do not like being cut off from Europe, and classed with Chinese Mongols and other Orientals. They desire their activities to be known in England. Several American papers and agencies have permanent correspondents in Moscow, and the German papers are fully represented; but the English Press has taken the stand, and, quite rightly, that its representatives must be free to come and go as they will, and that there must be no censorship over their opinions. These conditions have not yet been fulfilled.

Since the breaking-off of relations with Russia, if any Englishman wishes to enter that country, or to pass through Russia on his way to the Far East, *via* the Siberian Railway, he must apply for a *visa* through the Soviet embassy in Paris. It takes several weeks to obtain the authorization from Moscow, but in my case the matter had already been arranged, and I obtained my *visa* immediately, the greatest courtesy being shown me.

I had a long talk with Comrade Neumann, Secretary of the Soviet embassy in Paris. It was obvious from the very beginning of this conversation that Mr. Neumann was anxious to find out something about my attitude towards the Soviet Government before he authorized the Consul to grant me the necessary *visa*. I was placed in a difficult position, as I had to avoid two extremes. I dared not say I was bitterly hostile to Bolshevism through fear

of jeopardizing my prospects of being allowed in; on the other hand, I had no desire to obtain a permit by false pretences, by stating I was a keen admirer of Soviet institutions. I had therefore to choose my words carefully, and I said to Comrade Neumann:

"I shall make no effort to conceal the fact that I cordially dislike Communism or Bolshevism, by whatever name you describe your new system of government. On the other hand, I subscribe to the principle that every country has a perfect right to choose its own form of government. Therefore, if Communism suits the peculiar tastes and needs of the Russian people, it is not my affair. On the other hand, I would oppose it in every way in my power were the Soviet Government to endeavour to introduce it into my own country. I shall therefore go to Russia with an open mind. I shall endeavour to give a strictly accurate picture of what I see. I shall not hesitate to criticize that which I find bad; on the other hand, if I see things and institutions which I find useful and advantageous, I shall not hesitate to praise them."

With this explanation Neumann seemed perfectly satisfied and told me I could have my *visa* at any time I cared to go and call for it at the Consulate! Shortly afterwards I received the permit, authorizing me to cross the frontier at Niegoreloj.

I had a few hours to spend in Berlin, and I went for a stroll under the Unter den Linden, when a guide rushed out of a side street and accosted me. He insisted upon attaching himself to me for the day, and told me his story. "My father was a prosperous boot manufacturer and made immense sums of money supplying boots to the army

during the war. We put everything, except leather, into the boots because the leather was required for the bread. Then came the Armistice, and inflation of our currency, the Allies were able to pass goods free of duty through the occupied territory, and we could no longer compete. All our savings were in War Loan, so we lost everything. There are millions like me in Germany now. We cannot get jobs because the firms want younger men. I joined an infantry regiment and fought on the Western front, being six times wounded by shrapnel at the Battle of Loos. Then I joined the Flying Corps and was employed in raids on London. In the great day raid my machine was told off to drop bombs on the Bank of England. Thank God I missed it ! because all the money I make now comes from English travellers."

I confided to him that I was on my way to Russia. "I know Russia well," he replied. "Have you a pass ?" I explained I had my passport and a letter from the *Daily Telegraph*. "That is all very well, but they will not understand a word. I will have a proper pass in Russian made out, which will enable you to go about unmolested," he answered. Later in the day he returned with this document, which was destined to be of great help to me.

CHAPTER II

MOSCOW ON THE NATIONAL FÊTE DAY

THERE is no well-defined line of demarcation between old Europe and communized Russia. The train meanders from Berlin across the great plain which stretches away to the Urals. The frontier is just a line. You pass from that part of the plain in which Karl Marx produced his academic theories into the eastern half where Lenin-Trotsky-Zinoviev-Stalin and Co. have endeavoured—or are endeavouring—to carry the Master's words into practice.

"A prophet has no honour in his own country." This old truism is lucky for Germany. It proves the innate sense of the Teutons. They forced Karl Marx to live in exile in England most of his life, and they have allowed the Slavs to experiment with his theories. Now the latter are doing their utmost to induce the Master's compatriots to lend them the necessary money to make good the mess created by his theories.

From Warsaw you follow the track of the Grand Army to Moscow. Every station brings back the sombre memories of that disastrous campaign which changed the face of Europe.

"In a century," said the Corsican, "Russia will be all Republican or Cossack." He scored a right and left. Up to 1917 Russia was all Cossack; now it is all Republican —the term corresponding in Napoleon's mind with Bolshevism or Communism.

Except for the railroad, the country has not changed in the least since the Emperor's day. Filthy villages; mud tracks; barren pine forests without undergrowth—all are there. As you gaze from the window of your well-heated *wagon-lit* you can visualize the remnants of the tortured Grand Army, frozen and starving, struggling back to Leipzig and Waterloo, surrounded by the progenitors of the present-day Red Army.

You will not feel lonely when you approach the frontier station. You may have come all the way from London or Paris without exchanging a word with a soul on the train, but, irresistibly, as you approach the Russian frontier, you seek companionship. You creep closer to your neighbour, talk with all and sundry, and exchange harmless jests. Everyone says to everyone else, "When do we arrive?" Whatever the Bolshevists have failed to do, they have certainly managed to instil a strange, indefinable dread into every one who enters Russia for the first time.

When you pass the Polish frontier station you become restless and uneasy. No one remains seated, all throng the corridors. Some one says: "Well, now we're for it!" What we're for, no one stops to think. A soldier bearing the green facings of the G.P.U. army enters the carriage demanding "Your passports!" in a somewhat peremptory voice. His manner is more insolent than rough; he believes he is dealing only with capitalists, and wishes to show the contempt of his government for that hated class; but, at the same time, he does not wish to do anything to frighten away capital, which is so badly needed by his government.

The train stops at Niegoreloj and here all must descend, for you are about to leave the narrow-gauge European railways, and pass to the broader Russian gauge, which will eventually land you without a change of train on the waters of the Sea of Japan. Porters, mostly elderly men —obviously survivors of the old régime—each wearing a white apron, convey your luggage to the custom-house. It is handled with the greatest respect and gentleness, very unlike the violent treatment it receives from both Gaul and Briton, when making its monstrous journey across the Channel. You pass into one of the most pleasant and best organized custom-houses it has ever been my lot to encounter in the course of many travels. It is constructed entirely of huge logs, and is well lighted and well heated. There is room for all baggage, which does not have to wait its turn or be piled on the top of a stranger's. To those who are accustomed to the cold, bleak, comfortless, squalid custom-houses at Dover, Boulogne and Calais, or to the open-air platform entertainment at Folkestone—which is a disgrace to any civilized country—this Karl Marx custom-house appears as a palace of comfort and luxury. There is no noise, no mad rushing hither and thither, looking for lost articles; no frantic appeals to the officials to pass your belongings. The Russians have become the most silent people in the world. Extreme politeness, and a genuine desire to aid, are the outward signs of the Soviet's paramount desire to attract a little of old Europe's hard-earned savings back into the land of universal confiscation.

The trunks of foreigners are opened, but it appears to be a mere formality. You are requested to state how

many roubles you have on you, but the officials invariably take your word as the truth. They want to know if you are smuggling roubles, which can be bought very cheaply in Berlin or Riga, back into Russia, for the Soviet dislikes above everything else seeing its paper money returning to its native land. The Chervonetz is regarded as an even more undesirable alien than a Grand Duke. Once it has passed the frontier, the portals are never open to it again, except under official auspices, after having been repurchased on highly advantageous terms.

Once your luggage is passed, the porter collects a small fee and conveys it to your sleeper. Tipping is strictly taboo. Your passport is handed back, and you are free to enter the train for Moscow, or the Far East.

The sleeping cars are just as good as they were in Tsarist times—infinitely more comfortable, owing to the broad gauge, than the *wagon-lits* of western Europe.

The attendants have, however, lost some of their smartness. This is due to the universal habit throughout Russia of trying to prove you are a humble member of the proletariat, whatever your occupation may be. But these conductors are survivors of the old régime, and their hearts beat warmly with memories of the fat tips of the past, when the representatives of occidental Europe, diplomats, capitalists, smart women, and sightseers curled themselves up in their comfortable beds. The only institution in Russia which has stood every assault of Communism, without changing a single iota, is the *wagon-lit*. Karl Marx never attempted to deal with the problem. They may not have existed in his time. You can mix up the sexes in compartments in Russia—but not varying

strata of cleanliness. Even the most pronounced Communist will insist upon travelling alone, or with some member of his Party who occupies the same relative position in the social scale of personal propriety.

Once you are alone in your compartment with the attendant, with the door shut, the outward veneer of Bolshevism fades rapidly away, and the soul of the dear old Russian retainer stands fully revealed. He delights to discuss the good old days.

The train leaves Niegoreloj at 10 p.m., and you arrive at Minsk about half an hour later, where there is a halt for twenty minutes, which enables you to pass into the refreshment rooms and obtain some supper, if you feel so inclined. Here the voyager sets foot in Modern Russia for the first time and catches the first glimpse of the proletariat, for whose benefit this illimitable revolution has been created —officially. The refreshment-rooms throughout Russia are now the common meeting-place for all those who are seeking warmth and light, whether they have sufficient kopeks in their pockets to buy a sausage, an apple, or a drill of vodka. They are invariably packed with every species of humanity, but even in this motley throng you can discern departures from the Communist theory of universal equality, for some are better dressed than others. Society invariably seems to divide itself into three strata, and it takes but a short time to discover that there are three distinct social orders of relative prosperity in Russia—if you judge by the standard of dress. Some of the women have a piece of fur on their coats; some have dresses made of better material; and the lowest in the scale is the peasant woman, with her woollen skirt, heavy

top-boots, and rough shawl, or blanket, entwined round her head and shoulders. The men display similar sartorial distinction. The highest grade costume amongst the Communists—outside of certain government circles in Moscow—corresponds to the clothes worn by a prosperous skilled mechanic and his family on a Sunday, or holiday, in England; the middle grade are little worse clad than many of the extreme poor and unemployed I have seen in London, and in the cities of the North; and the lowest are dressed in rags.

The entry of the hated capitalist into this motley throng now only arouses a mild sensation at Minsk, as the train passes through every night; but the people still love to obtain a glimpse of occidental Europe and will sit up to await the *train de luxe*, however late it may be.

You are greeted coldly and silently. From the throng seated at the tables, on the benches, or reclining on the floors, there arises a reeking musty smell of old clothes, sweat and dampness. There are many young children, professional beggars working on behalf of their families, or for the local Soviet they have established amongst themselves. They besiege you with signs, hardly uttering a word, and show remarkable skill in picking out currencies and coins which will not pass muster in Russia. These they return to you with the air of having a genuine grievance, and wait patiently until you replace them. There is little to appeal to your gastronomic tastes in the buffet—only apples, pears and sausages of various sizes, shapes and ingredients; but a bottle of thin white wine from the Crimea, or artificial Madeira, tastes good

after having passed through the whole length of Poland on bottles of sour beer—for nothing else is sold in the *Wagon-Restaurant* in that country.

The whistle sounds, and you make your way through the drowsy throng, many of whom will sleep there until the morning, to rejoin the train. These Russian peasants and middle classes, with whom you have touched shoulders for the first time, are exactly the same mentally and physically as those who gazed on the remnants of the Grand Army crawling west; they are the same peasants of the Tsarist régime, only you remark them more because all enjoy the right to frequent the restaurants, which were formerly reserved for first class passengers only.

I awoke on the morning of November 7—Russia's National Fête Day—to find the train slowly wending its way towards Moscow, and every station and village bedecked with red flags of all sizes, and almost every window displaying a picture of Lenin. No one was at work. Most of the villagers had collected on the station platforms, and were sitting around in their best clothes, while the actual demonstrations were left to the children, who marched up and down waving their red flags but never uttering a sound. They resembled automata. I saw not the slightest sign of enthusiasm. Our luxury train passed like a golden streak through these villages, whose ramshackle wooden hovels seemed to belong to a different epoch.

The restaurant-cars in the *trains de luxe* are not quite up to the standard of the sleeping cars. There are second and third class carriages attached to the train, and all have

the right to dine or drink together. You order everything *à la carte*, at any hour you may feel inclined. The attendants are slovenly in appearance, wearing black trousers and dirty white blouses. Red Guards, engine-drivers, peasants, and passengers come in and sit where they like; they smoke cigarettes and cigars, made of coarse tobacco, hour after hour, so that the atmosphere of the car resembles a Chinese joss-house. All have a sullen look and appear ashamed to make themselves agreeable to strangers.

On the train I had made the acquaintance of two English girls on their way to the Far East. They had never travelled outside of England before, and were horrified at the slovenly atmosphere of the restaurant, and at the free and easy manners of the attendants. My two young friends seemed to have heard little of the Russian Revolution and quite failed to understand why the dining-car was so different from those on the English railways. The attendants, Red Guards, and peasants, regarded them with equal curiosity. The other passengers having departed, we found ourselves alone.

"How disagreeable they look," said Miss B.

"They never smile," answered Miss F.

"They look so savage," said her friend.

"And how dirty!"

"Oh! I prefer an English train, where everyone is so smart. Fancy all the servants smoking pipes in the car, in their shirt-sleeves!"

"I must have some brandy," replied Miss B. "They make me feel quite queer."

The bottle was produced.

"Now, girls," I said. "I am going to try a little experiment."

Calling one of the attendants, I indicated to him by a series of signs—readily understood—that I was offering a glass of brandy to all present. The transformation was remarkable.

On hearing the glorious news, all sprang to attention, making bows and signs of amity. The stern faces of the destroyers of capital suffused in smiles as the bottle was handed round, and the glasses filled. One old hard-featured man, who looked as if he had cut many a throat and scuttled many a prosperous firm, solemnly marched down the car at the head of this "bloodthirsty" gang, who filled Miss B. and Miss F. with such sinister forebodings. He approached me, twined his arm round mine and made me drink out of his glass in the old Russian fashion. The two girls were not spared and were made to sip from the glasses of Red Guards, attendants and engine-drivers. One free glass of brandy and the whole bottom fell out of the Revolution in the *Wagon-Restaurant*. The old class hatreds vanished. Communist, capitalist and mannequin were united for a brief moment to drink to better times.

Two hours later I glanced out of the window. The sun was lighting up the glittering domes and spires of the Kremlin. Moscow, the city of mystery, was reached.

I arrived in Moscow on November 7, the eleventh anniversary of the Revolution. All the shops were shut, all business at a standstill, and almost the entire population appeared to be in the streets. It was a dull November day, with a slight drizzle, somewhat cold, and the streets

were thick with mud. Outside the station I found two or three motor-cars serving as taxis, and a ramshackle collection of old pre-Revolution droshkies with wretched half-starved horses. The drivers, none of whom looked younger than sixty, appeared equally in need of nourishment. A Greek friend, whom I had found on the journey, and the two English girls, Miss B. and Miss F., whose train for the Far East would not leave until night, decided to accompany me to the hotel, and have a look at Moscow. In Berlin I had been told to stop at the Grand Hotel. But we could not reach it. Every street was blocked with silent processions of men, women and children, which were being shepherded by troops and police towards the Red Square in front of the Kremlin, where Lenin's body lies in state in its temporary tomb. Each group had banners of different designs bearing inscriptions, and pictures. Almost everyone carried a small red flag, the houses were draped in red, and many windows contained a picture or bust of Lenin. Some showed the features of Stalin, and I saw one or two of Trotsky, but most of his have been withdrawn since his exile to Siberia. These silent processions moved like streams towards their confluence with a great river. The organization was perfect, every tributary riverlet of humanity being kept in its prescribed route by the police and G.P.U. troops.

Our driver made several gallant efforts to reach the Grand Hotel, but was not allowed to pass. Finally he stopped in despair and said, "It is no use. We cannot reach the Grand. I will leave you at the Savoy instead. They are all the same." So we alighted at the Savoy, cold, depressed, and extremely hungry and thirsty. A porter in mufti

greeted us, took my passport and gave me a suite of two rooms and a bathroom for 22 roubles *per diem* (about two pounds five shillings per day at the Soviet computation). We found the rooms clean and well heated, and then eagerly demanded the way to the restaurant. The porter smiled a sickly smile, and replied, " The restaurant is closed throughout the three days of the Fête—the 7th, 8th, and 9th. You can order what you like in your rooms, but not before four o'clock, as the kitchen is closed." The faces of my companions fell. " Well, in any case, let us have a drink," said Miss B. The porter again smiled his sickly smile, and replied, " No drinks can be served during the three days of the Fête, by order of the government." We implored him in vain. There was nothing doing. No one dares disobey an order of the Soviet Government.

We returned to my apartment, where we found a plentiful supply of hot water, so the two girls, as a solace to their disappointment, turned us out, and took a bath. Then we sallied forth into the streets, feeling hungry and depressed. An indescribable air of melancholy hung over the city. We tried to reach the Red Square, but every route was blocked by the troops and police, and no one was allowed to pass. Suddenly I remembered I had in my pocket the paper given me by the guide in Berlin.

I produced it at the first barricade with fear and misgiving: the effect was, however, magical. The police broke the line, and we were allowed to pass. Six times it was employed and did the trick, before we found ourselves in the Red Square facing the wonderful red walls of the Kremlin and Lenin's temporary mausoleum. Entombed

FINLAND
Murmansk
Kandalaksha
Gulf of Bothnia
White
Mezen
R. Pechora
Archangel
R. Mezen
Onega
R. Onega
R. Dvina
R. Vychegda
Petrozavodsk
Onega
L.
Veliki Ustyug
Gulf of Finland
Ladoga
Leningrad
R. Suchona
Vologda
Perm
ESTHONIA
Novgorod
Pskov
Porkhov
Rybinsk
Kostroma
R. Viatka
LATVIA
R. Dvina
Tver
R. Volga
Vladimir
Kazan
R. Kama
Nijni Novgorod
MOSCOW
Polotsk
Vitebsk
R. Dnepr
WHITE
RUSSIA
Smolensk
Kaluga
Tula
R. Oka
Samara
Minsk
Penza
POLAND
R. Pripet
Orel
R. Don
Jeletz
Tambov
Saratov
R. Volga
Uralsk
R. Desna
Kursk
Voronej
R. Ural
Jitomir
Kiev
Kharkov
Poltava
Tzaritzin
R. Bug
UKRAINE
R. Donetz
Ekaterinoslav
Balta
R. Dniester
RUMANIA
Nikolaev
R. Dnieper
Kostov
Astrakhan
CASPIAN SEA
Odessa
Kherson
Sea of Azov
CRIMEA
R. Kuban
Stavropol
R. Kuma
Sevastopol
Ekaterinodar
R. Terek
BLACK SEA
GEORGIA
Tiflis
R. Kur
AZERBAIJAN
Baku
ARMENIA
Erivan
R. Aras
EUROPEAN RUSSIA

in the wall behind the Master are the bones of dead Bolshevist leaders. A grand-stand had been erected, stretching the whole length of the square. Here, earlier in the day, the government officials and favoured spectators had taken up their positions to view the parade of the troops. Above the grand-stand, stretching to the top of the wall, was a gigantic red flag, and on either side an enormous wooden hammer, and sickle, which are the national emblems of Soviet Russia. The huge red banner bore an inscription in golden letters, exhorting the people to stand by Lenin's teachings. The troops, formed in serried ranks, left a lane between the grand-stand and themselves through which the processions of the proletars were allowed to defile. The Russians, never having known freedom, are accustomed to have all their movements restricted and organized by the authorities. Thus this mass of men, women, and children, entering the square from the West Gate, were kept banked up against the Kremlin walls like a mighty torrent threatening to overflow. Hour after hour this never-ending stream flowed by. Each detachment carried its banners and effigies, hideous and menacing. Most of the banners bore insulting inscriptions about capitalist countries, and most of the effigies represented well-hated foreign statesmen. John Bull frequently appeared; Mussolini was perhaps first favourite, and Sir Austen Chamberlain was brought along in a cart with a rope hung round his neck attached to a beam above his head.

What of the people? What were they really thinking about? Were they really rejoicing in their hearts? I defy anyone to define what was passing through their minds and I would not venture on an opinion myself. Their

countenances were expressionless; all appeared tired, hungry, and chilled to the bone, and they displayed not the slightest outward enthusiasm; probably the majority were only thinking of their next meal. Not a sound escaped from this multitude. They moved like a procession of automata, the greyness of the scene and of the atmosphere being only relieved by the red flags and banners. Even when passing Lenin's tomb, which they were supposed to salute, they hardly turned their heads. I was irresistibly reminded of the descriptions of one of those vast herds of buffalo changing their pastures in the prairies, when menaced by the gradual advance of civilization—all moving in the same direction, in perfect order, as if propelled by some mysterious force, while the Indians and wolves hang on their flanks ready to pick up the sick and the weaklings who fall on the way. This mighty river of humanity, after passing through Red Square, divided into smaller streams, which were shepherded by the police into the various quarters of Moscow from whence they came.

We were standing outside the line of soldiers in front of Lenin's tomb, and the eyes of all should have been fixed reverently on the wooden mausoleum containing all that is mortal of Vladimir Ilyitch Vlianov, when I noticed the crowd looked half left at our group instead of half right at Lenin's tomb. Then I realized what an incongruous picture we made in the midst of this revolutionary throng. In fact, the eyes of every man, woman and child in the procession were fixed on Miss B., the English mannequin from Bond Street, making her brief halt in Moscow before proceeding to the Far East. She was dressed in the latest fashion, suitable only for Cup Day at Ascot, and never

intended for the grey skies and muddy streets of revolutionary Moscow. She provided the only change in shades from the prevailing grey and red. Her patent leather shoes shone like jewels in the mud ; the thinnest of silk stockings displayed her shapely legs to perfection ; her light blue skirt and jacket were surmounted by a beautiful grey lynx fur coat, and her golden locks were crowned by the latest hat from the Rue de la Paix.

From time to time you will read in the papers that an enthusiastic lepidopterist has discovered some rare and beautiful specimen, which has not been seen in a particular locality for very many years. Now the crowd regarded Miss B. in exactly the same manner. She represented to them something they had not seen since pre-war days ; while many of the younger generation had never looked upon her like before. For the first time I saw some of them actually smile. We were surrounded by a band of Red Guards, police and detectives, some of whom had broken their ranks to obtain a closer view of this *rara avis.*

As I watched this huge crowd pouring by Lenin's tomb, I fell into a kind of reverie. How much history had been written within those red walls, and how much was now being written outside. From the tower above, Napoleon had gazed on burning Moscow ; from that gate he had passed to escape the flames of vengeance ; in this square the Old Guard had paraded for the last time before commencing the Via Dolorosa which ended at the Beresina. From that tower, Ivan the Terrible had gazed on countless of his victims being tortured and executed in the round stone enclosure known as the Place of the Skulls, which remains

just as it was. Where we were now standing, Peter the Great had himself put the Strelitz to death, by laying their necks in long rows on blocks of wood, and then inviting all and sundry to try their skill in hacking them off.

From this reverie on the past, and contemplation of the present, I was suddenly brought back to realities by the voice of Miss B. She was gazing with a disdainful look on the squalor of the mob, and then her eyes passed to the wooden structure containing all that is mortal of the soul of modern Russia. Suddenly she murmured in a voice that all could hear, but which fortunately no one except ourselves could understand, "Who was Lenin?" I felt as if an earthquake had shaken the ground beneath my feet. The walls of the Kremlin seemed to shake. Everything seemed to bend backwards just as they do in one of Bateman's pictures. For the first time I realized the unbridgeable gulf that separates Bond Street from the Red Square.

"Who was Lenin?" What a world of truth lies behind this innocent inquiry. When the Russian women, in their turn, in days to come, make this same inquiry, why then it can be said the Red Revolution has passed into oblivion. Yet surely future generations will be asking "Who was Lenin?" and "What is the meaning of this upheaval which has shaken Russia to her foundations?"

Our presence began to attract too much attention, and officers commanding the troops came, and explained to us by gesticulation that we could no longer remain. We were shadowed out of the Square, and then made our way back to the hotel.

It was now past four o'clock and we rang for the waiter to order food. He brought a varied menu and our first

meal in Moscow was not too bad. We also succeeded in getting him to ignore the regulations prohibiting drink, and to serve us with a bottle of Russian Madeira and some beer. After this life seemed rather more *couleur de rose*, but we could not shake off the feeling of depression produced by the spectacle of so much misery and suffering in the streets.

At 10 p.m. I went to the station to see my friends leave for the Far East.

What a picture a great artist could paint of the restaurant of a Russian station under Soviet rule. The whole history of the Revolution is to be found written in the throng which invades the one spot where heat, and food, and drink are to be found. The majority of those lolling over the tables, sitting on the chairs, or lying in masses huddled together on the floor, are not waiting for any train, but have simply crept in for shelter and warmth. The remnants of all classes are represented. There are unmistakable survivors of the old régime in rags and tatters, yet unable to conceal their origin—try as they will. They can be distinguished by their inability to conceal their disgust of the common throng, whilst ostensibly mingling with them. There are peasants from all over Russia and distant Siberia, who have made this long journey to see the Capital, or in the hope of buying manufactured goods, or seeking employment, or because they belong to some local Soviet delegation. There are industrial workers who have come to Moscow in search of jobs. Except for some of the Kulaks—rich peasants—who have got on their best clothes, all are miserably clad and filthy dirty. A steam rises from their warm unwashed bodies, and the room is filled with a thin reeking

mist. Those who have money to spend are busily gorging themselves at the tables on the viands from the counter. They are served by waiters in very dirty white coats, most of whom are survivors of Tsarist days. Those who have no money follow every movement of the waiters as they carefully wend their way amongst the recumbent forms on the floor. The smell of the stewed meats and thick soups is tantalizing to those who have not the kopeks necessary to purchase even a piece of bread. Mingled with this throng are many Secret Service agents and you cannot start the most harmless conversation without some one edging up closer to try and overhear you. There are also many soldiers, chiefly belonging to the army of the G.P.U., with their green facings. They are the privileged class and have the best places at the tables; everyone, in fact, seems to make way for them, for they inspire universal fear.

Having some time to wait before the train was due to leave, we found places at a table and ordered a bottle of Russian Champagne for six roubles. It bears little resemblance to the French article, but you become accustomed to it after a short time, and it is considered a rare luxury in Russia.

Then the door of the platform is thrown open, and you pass out of this reeking atmosphere of human sweat, and bad food, into the cold night air. What a contrast! How luxurious and comfortable appears the *train de luxe* which is bound for old Europe, or the Far East, when compared with the city in which you are condemned to stay. An indescribable longing seized me to go right back to Paris or London.

A whistle sounds, the train steams slowly away, a hand is waved from the window, and I find myself alone in Moscow!

When I returned to the hotel I had a sensation of not possessing a friend in the world and of being surrounded by spies and enemies. Never have I felt more deserted and melancholy. The Moscow atmosphere had settled on me.

CHAPTER III

LIFE IN MOSCOW

THE Hopeless Dawn! That is how you feel when you wake up for the first time in Moscow. I looked out of the window and shuddered. I felt I had not got a friend in the world, and what is worse, would never find one again. It was pouring with rain; the streets were ankle-deep in mud, and the atmosphere resembled a bleak foggy November day in London. I watched the blurred shadows hurrying through the darkened streets, nearly all carrying wicker baskets and apparently in search of food. The only sound came from the incessant clanging of the trams, and their warning bells. I rang for the waiter and indicated to him by signs that I required a *Café complet.* He returned with some very nasty Ersatz coffee, made of God knows what, a plentiful supply of fresh milk and a plate piled to the brim with enormous brown horseshoe rolls, composed of very bad flour mixed with rye. He refused to leave until I had paid for it. This repast cost three roubles, or about six shillings. The waiter was very pleased with me. I could not swallow the bread, or honey and butter, which now became his perquisites. Credit is quite unknown in Russia. The waiters apparently pay the hotel and collect the money from the clients. There is a heavy tax on your rooms, and, unless you pay each day, this increases at compound interest, so that at the end of the week you are horrified at the size of your account.

I went out sight-seeing. Every one seemed dressed alike, in the same drab colours. You miss, above all, the smart women of the West. In reality you speedily discover differences in the clothes of both sexes, but no one dresses in anything but brown and black, through fear of attracting attention. No one wishes to be mistaken for a Nepman or Bourgeois, to be run in, and asked awkward questions as to sources of wealth which allow such a display. You are struck by the downtrodden look of the people, by their sullen demeanour, by the absence of smiles and laughter, and by the silence with which they move about the streets. No one seems to have any desire to talk with his neighbour; but for the eternal clanging of the trams, and the ringing of their bells, Moscow would be the most silent city in the world. Fear, depression, poverty, and that tragic look of abandoned hope are writ on the faces of all. Every now and again you encounter a young Bolshevist couple in their 'teens, who are courting, and who smile in spite of all. You gaze at them in amazement. Smiles seem to be out of place and you wonder what they have found to make life happy; but they have known no other.

These are your first impressions. They will not change during your stay, but after a short time you become accustomed to the melancholy atmosphere, the silent movers in the streets, and the drabness. True Russians long for the winter and snow. Moscow is then infinitely brighter and cleaner, when the white mantle has settled over the city; but the sufferings of the masses increase. Last winter was very late, and there was little snow before the middle of December. Had Napoleon been

favoured with such a winter, in 1812, the Grand Army would have reached the Niemen.

Your first stroll through the streets is hampered by the attentions of hundreds of beggars of all ages. The word seems to go round that a "wealthy stranger" has arrived, and they wait on your footsteps, blocking your path at every turn, and you frequently trip over a child who has put its arms round your legs, while trying to tear yourself from an adult who has got hold of your arm. Once you start giving you are finished. If you wish to be charitable it is best to find some Society to take your money, for if you once obtain the reputation of being a street philanthropist, your steps will be dogged morning, noon and night.

I only stayed two days in the Savoy Hotel, and then moved into the Grand, which is bigger, and has the only restaurant with any pretensions to the name in Moscow. The few Europeans who go to Moscow generally stop there, and you do not feel quite so lonely, as you can generally find some one to talk to. These hotels are all run by the G.P.U., whose agents thus have all visitors under strict supervision.

I like to lunch at 1 p.m., but when I wandered into the restaurant I found it deserted, except for a waiter, who told me I could order *à la carte*. Caviare seems to be the staple article of diet in Russia; but after a few days I could no longer bear the sight of it. Vodka is always served with it. The Russians still consume vast quantities. There are no cocktails, no sherry (from Portugal), and none of the drinks one is accustomed to at home. Whiskey and French brandy are quite unobtainable. You can

still buy some port privately, known as "Sacramental Port," as it was brought into Russia for the use of the Greek Orthodox Church, but all the stocks were confiscated by the Bolshevists. The food in the hotels is badly cooked and ill-served, in spite of the authorities going out of their way to see that foreigners get the best of everything. The waste is colossal; the helpings are gigantic, for the Russians have the habit of eating one dish for economy's sake, and insist upon having at least three normal portions piled on to one plate. I found the soups, as usual, excellent, as they always have been in Russia. The game is good, but the meat for the most part of poor quality. Fish from the great rivers is plentiful, if you have the taste for it. If a stranger were to judge food conditions from what he can obtain in the Grand Hotel, he would go away with the impression that Russia is a land overflowing with milk and honey. But if you glance out of the window, having just left a large quantity of steak untouched on your plate, you will see the semi-starving throng hurrying by to join the queues outside the food shops.

I wondered why no one came in to lunch—but then the head waiter explained. Those Russians who can afford to frequent the Grand Hotel take one meal a day, generally about 4 p.m. Thus there is a table d'hôte dinner which commences at 2 p.m. and continues until about 7 p.m. If you looked in between four and seven you generally found the restaurant full, and the band playing. The prices for the table d'hôte are reasonable, otherwise there would be no clients; but if you order *à la carte* at your usual luncheon hour the cost is colossal—at least four

times as expensive. If you dine at about 8 p.m. you will again find yourself alone and must order *à la carte*. The restaurant only fills up again for supper between eleven and midnight; after that hour you can go on eating until 4 a.m. if you are so inclined.

There is plenty of Russian wine of good quality from the Crimea. There is also a Madeira made in Russia which is very popular, and bears a reasonable resemblance to the real article. Russian champagne costs about six roubles a bottle, and is a very poor imitation of the French, but, after you have been a short time away from the genuine article, you become accustomed to it. It is considered a great luxury, and after any party some one who was not present is sure to say: "Did they give you champagne?"

There are still stocks of foreign wines to be obtained at the Government stores, which were confiscated during the Revolution. The champagne is finished, but you can buy excellent Bordeaux, St. Julien, Lafitte, and St. Estèphe, also marvellous Burgundy like Nuits and Chambertin, all pre-war stocks, at remarkably low prices. There are also excellent Rhine wines—Niersteiner, Rüdesheimer, etc., better than you can buy in London or Paris because they have been maturing for so long. If you purchase these foreign wines in the hotel you pay the most ridiculous prices. For instance, a bottle of Niersteiner costs you four roubles at a government store, and twenty-four at the Grand Hotel! St. Julien two roubles the bottle in the store, and ten in the hotel! Thus it is best to buy your own wine, keep your own cellar in your room and pay the hotel a small corkage for the right to drink it in the restaurant. When I left

Russia the stocks were rapidly diminishing and will not be replenished.

I spent my first day in Moscow all alone, conscious, however, that I was being watched. You are said to be followed everywhere, but I never made any effort to conceal my movements and soon forgot all about spies. I was feeling very lonely when, on the second day, Mr. Duranty, the Special Correspondent of the *New York Times*, called to see me. He has been in Russia off and on for seven years, knows the ins and outs better than anyone, and was able to put me wise on many things.

Meanwhile, I had left letters of introduction on many of the Embassies and Legations, and invitations began to come in. By the fourth day the feeling of being completely deserted began to pass away. To be invited to lunch or dinner at an Embassy is an *événement* in Moscow, after the bad food in the hotels, served at unnatural hours. The ambassadors, ministers, their families and their staffs are the embodiment of kindness and hospitality. Their own lives are restricted and lonely ; they feel for the poor stranger who is worse off than themselves, and they leave no stone unturned to make one's stay lively and agreeable. I shall take this opportunity of thanking all my friends amongst them, without mentioning names.

My first official visit was to Mr. Rothstein, the head of the Press Bureau. He is a man whose life has been passed in England, largely in Manchester, and he formerly wrote for the *Manchester Guardian*. He is short, thick-set and talks English, so some say, better than he speaks Russian. He is a vast fund of information, not only on Russia but on England. I don't know anyone who understands our

system of local government better than Rothstein, with the possible exception of Mr. Neville Chamberlain. He seems to have made it the study of a lifetime. After speaking with him for an hour he had almost convinced me that local government in Russia was founded on our own system, that there was no essential difference, and that the like existed nowhere else in the world. Mr. Rothstein took particular pride in the fact that our municipal and borough councils represent the authority of the Government in the counties, and that the local Soviets function in exactly the same way in Russia. "Neither England nor Russia," he added, "has the tyrannical prefect system where all the power is in the hands of one man, who is responsible to the Ministry of the Interior." Yet, somehow, before I left Russia, I felt I would rather be under the defunct Municipal Council of Poplar than under the most benevolent local Soviet. The system may be the same, but the procedure is different.

Mr. Rothstein was always a pleasure to talk with because he never attempted to paint a roseate picture, but to deal with the facts as they are. While ever ready to defend the principles of his party, he never tried to disguise the difficulties with which they are faced.

Having once broken the ice, I soon got into touch with many other Soviet officials, and went the round of the various departments. Mr. Rothstein asked me what I wanted to see, and invited me to draw up a programme. This I did. He then said: "The best thing I can do is to pass you on to the Society for Cultural Relations, which takes charge of all foreigners. Madame Kamenev is the head of it."

Filled with hopes, I visited Madame Kamenev, who is Trotsky's sister. Her position is thus a delicate one, as her husband is also of his party, and was then "somewhere in Siberia." I found her very agreeable and willing, and went away thinking life would be made easy for me. I soon found, however, that the Society for Cultural Relations was practically useless. All my suggestions came to naught, and I could only see under their auspices what I could just as well see without their assistance.

Thus, by the end of the first week, I found myself acquainted with almost everyone whom the Law allows you to know in Russia, but cut off from all those I really wished to meet. It takes time and patience to dig under the surface of officialdom into those social strata which are groaning under the Bolshevist régime.

It takes an even longer time to accustom yourself to conditions of life which prevail nowhere in the world outside of Soviet Russia. Everyone lives in an atmosphere of suspicion and fear of his neighbour, even if that neighbour is ostensibly his most intimate friend. This same mistrust extends even to the Legations; I have had confidential talks with ambassadors and ministers, who have requested me to tell no one of my visit, as they did not wish the fact to become known to the authorities. I have met and conversed, in their offices, with many intelligent young Soviet officials, who have wished to talk with me in private, in order to give me their true opinion on what is passing in Russia; yet with very few exceptions they have all resolutely refused to come and see me, because "they would at once be sent for and interrogated at the G.P.U. Headquarters."

If you find a Soviet official—or any Russian for that matter—who does not mind being seen with you in public, or meeting you in private, you can be perfectly sure he is an agent of the G.P.U., who has instructions from Headquarters to find out what you are doing, whom you are seeing, and what you are thinking. Yet although you know that those who profess to call themselves your friends are really spying on you all the time, you become very glad of their company, for unless you associate with these agents of the G.P.U. you are cut off from all society, except that of the Corps Diplomatique. The wisest course is to express yourself freely, to praise that which you consider praiseworthy, and to criticize whole-heartedly the absurdities which you see taking place every hour of the day. It is only by acting thus that you will earn the respect of the Bolshevists. They detest lip-service which they know to be false, and much prefer to have a hostile critic in their midst, rather than some one who professes to admire Communist doctrines and institutions, but who, as soon as the frontier is passed, begins a campaign of abuse against them. I know I am not popular in Russia, and that I should not obtain a fresh *visa* to pass the frontier, but I can honestly say that outside of the frontier I have expressed no view on Communism or on the Soviet leaders in writing, which I did not openly express in talking with various Communists when I was in Moscow and Leningrad.

The hours I enjoyed most amongst the Bolshevists were at the receptions given by the Litvinovs at the Kharotonenko House where they do their official entertaining. Here would forgather many of the leading Commissars and minor officials, many of them men of education and

great intelligence. Here you found the aristocracy of the Revolution. You could always get up an argument, and dispute for hours on the respective merits of Adam Smith and Parliamentary government compared with the system prescribed by Karl Marx-Lenin-Stalin, etc. These discussions were always carried on in a very good part, and often led to frightful intellectual entanglements. Some of these intelligentsia who have joined the Bolshevist Party were extremely able advocates of their cause; but a great many hardly carried on the discussions with an air of profound conviction. They spoke rather like men who have seized the opportunity of letting their colleagues and chiefs know the purity of their principles, by reiterating them academically in public before a distinguished audience.

I found it much easier to get on with the full-fledged genuine Russian Communists than with the foreign sympathizers with the movement, some of whom dwell in Moscow, whilst others come on visits and stop at the Grand Hotel, in the finest suite of rooms. You find some English Communists or semi-Communists, but the majority represent different societies in the United States. They all profess the keenest admiration for Soviet institutions and doctrines, whilst carefully abstaining from facing any of the miseries and hardships which are endured by the unhappy Russians. They do not believe in restricting their own salaries to a maximum of 250 roubles per month, or living in the official space of six cubic metres, or waiting in queues for the necessities of life at 5 a.m. on a winter's morning with a temperature twenty degrees below zero; neither would they care to suffer arbitrary arrest without warning, or to undergo long and painful journies to Siberia,

there to remain forgotten and cut off from the world for years on end. These theorists believe in comfortable quarters, fat salaries, good food, and complete liberty to come and go as they wish. As long as they are allowed to lead their own lives they support Bolshevism wholeheartedly, and profess to consider it an ideal form of government. They deliberately ignore all that is rotten, cruel, and unjust, and shut their eyes to the prevailing misery. They only concentrate on the theoretical benefits and blessings which Bolshevism professes, but fails to confer on the masses.

With these people I possessed no sympathy, and speedily found myself at loggerheads with them. Heated discussions would take place in the dining-room of the Grand Hotel; they were eagerly listened to by visitors, waiters, spies, and agents of the G.P.U., and duly reported to head-quarters. At length some of these gentry went to Litvinov, the Commissar for Foreign Affairs, and said to him: "It is amazing that you allow a man like Ashmead-Bartlett into Russia, who is a sworn enemy of the Bolshevists, and who is sure to write against the Soviet Government."

I always liked Litvinov personally, and his reply was duly reported to me. "What you say is quite true. We know all about Ashmead-Bartlett and his views. But there is one advantage, we know where we stand. Ashmead-Bartlett says such dreadful things about us here, that knowing the English Press as I do, it would be quite impossible to print them in an English paper. Therefore, whatever he writes can't be as bad as what he thinks. We would far rather deal with an open enemy than with

those who come here and profess to be our friends, and then, the moment they are out of the country, say the worst they can about us."

I always enjoyed a conversation with Litvinov*, the acting Commissar for Foreign Affairs, who is likely to succeed to Tchicherin's position, for the latter is constantly ill, and has not been seen in Moscow for many months. Madame Litvinov, who is English by birth, is an even more fanatical supporter of the Bolshevist cause than her husband. Litvinov is much more broad-minded and better informed than the majority of the Bolshevist leaders, as his duties bring him constantly in touch with foreigners, and he is compelled to take frequent trips abroad. He is also an excellent linguist.

Litvinov and his wife were always extremely optimistic over the state of Russia. They laughed at the idea of there being a financial and economic crisis, or at the possibilities of a famine. His views were in fact diametrically opposed to those of Mr. Rothstein, who never made any effort to conceal the difficulties with which the government was faced. Litvinov always scouted the possibility of a change of government in Russia, declaring: "They have been saying the same thing for the past eleven years." He was always intensely interested in everything taking place in England. I believe he has a profound admiration for our country and institutions, which is not unnatural considering he has an English wife. He expressed great surprise when I told him the Conservatives would lose a great number of seats to the Socialists at the forthcoming General Election. I ex-

* Since this was written it has been reported that Litvinov has been dismissed.

plained that we occupied a number which did not really belong to us, as we had won them over the celebrated Zinoviev letter. Litvinov declared this letter was a fabrication cleverly engineered by enemies of the Soviet régime, and that its origin was likely to remain a mystery for all time.

Litvinov was somewhat hurt that the Powers had not accepted the Soviet proposals for universal disarmament when presented at Geneva. I told him that no one trusted the Soviet Government and that we had already reduced our army to the lowest point commensurate with the requirements of the Empire. I put it to him in this way: "Supposing we reduced our army by 150,000 men, we would not have a single soldier left, whereas you people would still have 400,000 regular troops, and the whole army of the G.P.U. 130,000 strong." Litvinov replied: "Our plan was for all armies to be reduced for the time being by fifteen per cent."

Herein lies the snag of the Soviet proposals. They are quite willing to reduce their regular army because it is too big for their needs, and is very costly, but the country is not held in subjection by the regular army chiefly composed of peasants, but by the police army of the G.P.U. which is organized in divisions and brigades, and is better armed and equipped than the regulars. The test of their sincerity would be if they came to Geneva with a proposal to reduce the troops of the G.P.U. But naturally they will never consent to a reduction of this force on which the security of the Communist Party depends.

Litvinov, like all other Russian leaders, was obsessed with the desire for a renewal of relations with England

and the United States. It appears that the first half of his wish is now likely to be fulfilled. He was also very keen on attracting foreign capital to Russia, but he would never admit that some settlement of the old debt must be a condition precedent to any fresh deal. The Bolshevists have a curious psychology. They cannot understand why foreign countries are not anxious to lend them money, or why they regard a liquidation of the old debt as an essential earnest of good faith. They invariably reply, "We have nothing to do with the old debt. It was a Tsarist obligation. We have done away with the Tsar. But as an act of grace, if you lend us money we might be prepared to come to some arrangement for a part payment, say up to twenty per cent."

Litvinov frequently expressed to me a great desire to have Lord Birkenhead and Mr. Winston Churchill visit Russia. He seemed to possess a very genuine admiration for these two statesmen and said, "They would be perfectly safe, and we would give them a very good reception."

I always enjoyed arguing with Madame Litvinov, who is a most fanatical supporter of Soviet institutions. She is bright, very intelligent, and ekes out their miserable official salary by writing books, and detective stories in English. One day I was describing to her my visit to the Chief Justice of Moscow to investigate the administration of justice in Soviet Russia, and I told her my investigations did not take long as no justice existed. I added, "Really, whatever you may think about Communism the administration of justice is too laughable for words. The idea of simple peasants being able to understand all the complications of the civil and criminal codes!"

This aroused Madame Litvinov's indignation, and she most stoutly defended the Soviet system; declaring that our judges were a class apart, that they knew nothing of the life of the people; and that only those who lived amongst the people could understand their habits, and wants, and manner of thinking, and could thus be in a position to judge between them. She would not agree with me when I told her we had excellent magistrates, who devoted their whole lives to a study of the poor. Madame Litvinov was emphatic in insisting that the Soviet Divorce Code was infinitely superior to our own. There are many, believing in increased facilities for divorce, who will cordially agree with her. She declared that nothing could be more absurd or illogical than our divorce code—I did not attempt to contradict this—and that all our judges and our legal forms and formalities were hopelessly out of date; that the opening of the Law Courts provided a pleasing spectacle which really belonged to the epoch of Queen Elizabeth, like almost all other English institutions.

When her son came in I said, "I suppose you will shortly send him to Eton." She laughed and did not deny the charge, but said, "Think what a terrible time this poor little Bolshey boy would have there." I assured her we never indulged in class or political persecutions like they do in Russia, and that he would be treated exactly like any other boy. However, she would not believe me.

The Litvinovs live in the gaudy Kharotonenko House, the former home of the ex-Russian Sugar King. Although Litvinov's salary is only 250 roubles per month, like any other Commissar's, they are naturally far better housed than the majority of Russians, because they have to entertain

foreigners, and they receive an allowance for this purpose. They live in an apartment in the building and the big reception rooms are used for official entertainments. Madame Litvinov showed me round the reception-rooms with gaudy gilt German decorations, a perfect example of the bad taste of the period. When I asked her, out of curiosity, what had become of the proprietor, she replied, "I don't know, he is either dead or abroad."

There was no word or feeling of sympathy for the man whose skill, industry and wealth had brought the palace into being. The Communists are all the same. They just slip into other people's shoes, without experiencing the smallest pangs of remorse for those they have ruined and robbed. The true definition of a Communist is this—"A person who has nothing to share with the rest of the community."

CHAPTER IV

THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT

WHEN I first arrived in Russia, a well-known diplomat gave me a sound piece of advice. "Endeavour," he said, "to regard the situation dispassionately as it exists to-day and dispel from your mind prejudice against the Bolshevists for what has happened in the past. Whatever your personal opinion, you will never arrive at an approximate estimate of the truth if you will allow your judgment to be swayed by personal animus against those whom you probably consider responsible for the most brutal and tyrannical régime known in history. Always remember you are dealing with Russians, a semi-Asiatic people, who are three centuries behind the rest of Europe in culture and civilization."

This advice was sound. No pen can undo what has been done in the past; bring back the dead or avenge their wrongs. These terrible events now belong to history. Most of the leading actors still remain on the stage. Who can say what Fate holds in store for them? Only objective criticism is of value, and many leading Communists say to you, "We encourage objective criticism."

There are many officials who are only too willing to discuss the merits and shortcomings of Communism, provided there is no other comrade present. In the Press, and at the meetings of the various Soviet Assemblies, there is sometimes outspoken criticism of the evils which are strangling

Russian trade and killing her hopes of recovery; but these voices are quickly stifled. A free vote on any essential issue is unknown, the Kulaks (rich peasants), the Nepmen, and the professional classes have been disfranchised, and the visible result of these protests is *nil*. But beneath the surface there is an ever-increasing wave of discontent which is sweeping, not only through the Russian people, but through all branches of the Soviet bureaucracy.

Many illusions have grown up in the minds of those who have not visited Russia since the Revolution. It is necessary to eliminate these.

Let it not be assumed the country is on the verge of a counter-revolution, or that we are likely to see an immediate change in the iron régime which rules Russia. The most the Russians themselves hope for is some gradual relaxation in the rigid economic policy which has brought Russia to financial chaos, and some gradual return to greater liberty of the subject.

Therefore, the belief that exists in the minds of many, that the Bolshevist administration is liable to fall out of a blue sky, should be dismissed from the mind. Nothing could be further from the truth. The whole machinery of power is controlled by the Communist Party, viz: the army, the G.P.U. troops, and the lines of communication. The government is carried on by a hierarchy of about eighty, who are firmly entrenched in the Kremlin, surrounded by armed guards. The actual executive direction of the Communist Party is in the hands of the Politbureau, composed of nine men; it is they who are all-powerful.

Another illusion exists in the minds of some in regard to the old régime. I have not met a soul in Russia who wished

to recall the Romanovs, however bitterly he detests the Bolshevists. The Romanovs are in fact little more than a name. No dynasty has ever been so quickly forgotten and so little lamented. The Bolshevists, who regard the survivors of the Romanov family with complete indifference, have not even disturbed those statues of the Tsars which have any claim to be considered works of art. Neither have they taken the trouble to remove the Imperial Eagles from the churches and palaces. In Leningrad, the statue of Alexander III, representing him holding back a powerful horse—symbolical of the Russian people—has been left, but with the following inscription added to ease the conscience of the art lovers: "Your father was murdered. Your son was murdered. You are left here as an object of hate and derision to the proletariat."

The attitude of the people towards the government varies according to their relative prosperity. The peasants, ill-clad, poverty-stricken and discontented, have not forgotten that the Revolution gave them the land; but now the Soviet Government has closed the open market and refuses to pay them the price they demand for their produce, taxes them unmercifully, and is unable to supply them with the manufactured goods they require, the majority feel they are little better off than under the old landowners. Since I left Russia a great campaign has been launched against the Kulaks and Middle Peasants. The peasants do not want the Tsars back, fearing their land will be taken from them, but they detest the local Soviets which control their destinies. The administration they desire has not yet appeared.

The intelligentsia and professional classes, who have

suffered more than any other, regard a return to Tsardom with equal misgiving. A professor put the case to me thus: "Whatever happens, do not let us turn back in mid-stream. The flood has nearly submerged us, and we are still struggling amidst heart-rending difficulties to reach the farther bank. There must surely come an improvement in our lot, for it could hardly get worse. Anything, however, is better than returning to the bank from whence we came."

This view may appear illogical, for the lot of the professional classes was infinitely better under the Tsars; but what my informant meant was this—and the majority of his class feel the same—the return of the Tsars would only mean a fresh revolution after a short period, and possibly a repetition of all the horrors and miseries of the past decade. The professional classes feel the last word has not been written in their book of destiny, and that one day those who survive will emerge on a shore of greater prosperity and social independence. Some even now profess to see the rays of a rising sun through the dark red clouds of Bolshevism.

It is an error to believe that Bolshevism is making headway in Russia, or that the people have accepted it as the last word in political wisdom. There is a curious contrast between the strength of the government judged by outward appearances, and the feeling that almost everyone has, that it lacks the first essentials of permanency. Communism, which was received with enthusiasm by the masses in its early stages, has now visibly lost ground. It is more firmly entrenched than ever, but has failed to make converts outside of its armed camp, and remains isolated from the

nation. Out of one hundred and fifty millions, the Bolshevist Party only numbers about eight hundred thousand, but—like the Fascisti in Italy—it holds the entire country in complete subjection.

What then are the peasants thinking about, and what sort of government do they really desire? The mass of the Russians are by nature a nation of *Petite Bourgeoisie* and, in the end, it will probably be found that a benevolent despotism, disguised as a moderate Social Democratic administration, with wide local autonomy, will suit them best. The peasants welcomed the Bolshevists because they gave them the land, and made them many promises—which have not materialized. Now they feel they are being sacrificed in the interests of the industrial classes. The government, bent on the too rapid industrialization of Russia, has now come up against insuperable difficulties, because the foundations are built on a discredited fiscal system, and are in danger of collapse. Capital cannot be found and wages are very low. The peasant is expected to provide cheap food for the town workers and he receives such a poor price for his produce that he has not sufficient money with which to purchase manufactured goods, even if the goods were available. Herein lies the crux of all the discontent. If the industrialists are to have cheap food, the peasant must sell at a minimum price, and he must also pay enormous taxes to keep industry going.

But the peasant will not accept this sacrifice in the true spirit of Communism, of which he knows but little, and cares still less. In spite of all the efforts of the Bolshevists, it has been found impossible to eliminate the Ego in the peasants, and the old structure of society—which the Revo-

lution was supposed to have destroyed for all time—is once again raising its hydra-head in every village throughout Russia and Siberia. The peasants will split into classes: Kulaks (rich peasants), middle peasants and poor peasants are once again proving that, although men may be born equal in the sight of God, or may be declared equal by a revolution, they commence to move up and down the social and economic scale from the very hour when each applies his individual energy and intelligence to the same problem. This uncompromising spirit amongst the peasants is the despair of the Bolshevist leaders; it is a pistol pointed constantly at the heart of Communism; a lasting reminder of failure.

In the towns, in spite of the efforts of the government, it has been found impossible to suppress private trade. The Nepmen, the class of private traders who have sprung up from the New Economic Policy, inaugurated by Lenin shortly before his death, are continually reasserting themselves, in spite of the persecution and restrictions under which they suffer. The government allows the Nepman to work until he has accumulated a modest capital, and then hands over his business to the true Communists, or else confiscates his gains by taxation. Yet, in spite of the sword of Damocles constantly hanging over his head, the Nepmen still continue to spring up like weeds in a tropical garden.

State control has turned out a costly failure, and is reducing Russia to chaos. The Communists have arrived at the end of the experimental period and are now at the parting of the ways. Two alternatives remain. Either Russia will continue to sink lower and lower in civilization; or else the Bolshevist Party must throw overboard most of its

most cherished political, and economic principles, revert to private trade, and allow private control of capital. Unfortunately, the old-time doctrinaires and revolutionists who are in power to-day will go to almost any lengths rather than admit defeat.

A tremendous struggle is now raging below the outward surface of tranquillity in Russia. Two centrifugal forces are struggling for the mastery; it is a fight to the finish between the extreme Communists and those who insist upon a return to natural economic laws.

To-day Russia is a vast wilderness of mess, muddle and make-believe, in spite of a highly efficient governing body in which there are many men of outstanding ability; but their talents are not employed to the best advantage. They have succeeded in organizing a powerful party; but, as they refuse to acknowledge the existence of natural economic laws, they have entirely failed to reconstruct Russia as they expected and the mass of the people are no better off than they were under the Tsars. Certain classes are in an infinitely worse position.

The organization of the Communist Party should serve as a model for all those who are meditating a raid on the liberties of a people. It is doubtful if it could be improved upon. The Tsarist régime has served as a rough model, but its power and efficiency have been immeasurably increased. In Russian history, it finds its closest parallel in the administration of Peter the Great, for whom all true Communists have a sincere admiration.

I paid a visit to Tsarskoe-Selo. In that tragic chalet, the causes of the Revolution are written in flaming letters. An excellent father of a family, without the slightest claims

to statecraft or political acumen, endeavoured to rule one-fifth of the habitable surface of the globe in the style of his powerful forefathers, from this secluded country house, situated on the extreme northern frontier of his vast empire. The unfortunate Tsar, and his ministers, were completely out of touch with the people and their problems. The ship of State rolled in an ocean of discontent, but the captain —not being on the bridge—never saw the waves breaking over his huge unseaworthy craft. Then came the World War, the final collapse, and the Tsar and his satellites disappeared for ever.

The Soviet Government has wisely moved the capital nearer the centre of gravity, to a city through which all the lines of communication pass, and which is out of the range of the guns of a hostile fleet. The successors of the effete hierarchy of Tsarskoe-Selo are now entrenched in the Kremlin, which might have been especially designed to house the chiefs of the Communist Party. Within its ample walls, buttresses, and towers, flanked by the Moscowa and the Red Square, are sufficient palaces, houses and halls to shelter the entire Politbureau and their staffs. There are enough cathedrals and churches to provide for the spiritual needs of all, but, as God has been expelled from the party, the sacred buildings are now locked up and are only opened at the special request of visitors. The narrow gates of the Kremlin can be easily defended by the troops of the G.P.U.

The dominating factor amongst all classes in Russia is fear, and the oppressors suffer from it even more than the oppressed. But in the Kremlin, so long as the walls do not fall down at the blast of White Trumpets, and the Red

Guards do not revolt, the chiefs of the Bolshevist Party can enjoy a certain measure of peace and security. Stalin hardly ever leaves these historic precincts. When Commissars visit the outer world to circulate amongst that vast proletariat on whom they are supposed to have conferred such inestimable benefits, it is in high-power motor-cars which dash through the streets at break-neck speed, and which return to cover with equal celerity.

The Soviet constitution is very complicated and difficult to understand. The mass of the Russian people have long since abandoned any attempt to unravel its mysteries, as a solution of the problem would make no difference to their lot. It is carefully designed to make everyone believe they are having a share in the government, through the exercise of the vote, while at the same time preserving all power and responsibility in the exclusive hands of a small Select Committee of the Communist Party.

The correct title of Soviet Russia is the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The Union is divided into four great Republics, the Russian, the White Russian, the Ukrainian and the Trans-Caucasian.

These Republics are in turn subdivided. The Russian contains twelve autonomous Republics and nine autonomous Regions. The Trans-Caucasian contains three independent Republics and three autonomous Regions.

Lenin's basic idea was that all power should spring from the local Soviets (Councils) and it is these Soviets which, starting at the bottom, send delegates to the Soviets of the district towns, Regions, and Republics until finally the delegates for the supreme Soviet, known as the All Russian Congress of Soviets, are elected. Thus, every factory and

village elects Soviets which send delegates to the district Soviet; the District Soviets elect delegates for the Regional; the Regional for one of the Republics or autonomous Regions; these in turn send them to the Soviet of one of the four great Republics into which Russia is divided and finally the Soviets of the Big Four send delegates to the All Russian Congress of Soviets, which meets in Moscow twice a year.

The All Union Congress of Soviets elects a Central Executive Committee of two hundred, who in turn appoint the Council of People's Commissars, to preside over the different departments. This Council is supposed to meet four times a year.

The Politbureau is not the supreme government executive—it corresponds to Eccleston Square, but on the other hand it is all-powerful, really controls the Council of People's Commissars, and directs State policy through its control of the party machine.

The Executive is the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee (Tsik). The R.C.P. and the Soviet Government are parallel organizations. Thus the All Union Congress of Soviets corresponds to the Party Congress; the Central Executive Committee the Party; the Politbureau to the Presidium of the Tsik and so on all through.

They overlap at one place only—the Workers and Peasants Inspection (*Babkvin*) which is one of the Commissariats, and so a government organ, and the Central Control Commission, which is a party organ, work largely in one body. The Party and its tentacles do the doctrinal work; the government organs the Executive. The lowest form of animal life in the administrative world is the

factory or village Soviet; in the party it is the Cellule or nucleus. These "nuclei" are found in every institution. They spread the Communist virus through the whole system.

But in reality the Politbureau is all powerful, and he who controls it (at present Stalin) directs the executive administration and rules Russia. It was the quarrel within the Politbureau three years ago which shook the Communist Party to its foundations, and finally led to the expulsion of Trotsky, Kamenev and Zinoviev. The Politbureau, when I was in Russia, consisted of the following nine persons, who formed the Supreme Governing Executive: Stalin, the chairman, who is also a member of the Third International; Kalinin, President of the Council of People's Commissars; Rykov, President of the Presidium (Republic); Voroshilov, Commissar of War; Tomsky, President of the Trades Unions; Rudzutak, Commissar of Eastern Peoples; Bucharin, Sub-Secretary of the Kumantung (Third International) and Editor of *Pravda* (Truth); Molotov, and Orghomyokidzé, Head of the Workmen and Peasants Inspection Committee. These are the "Big Nine" in Russia to-day, who are in supreme control of the policy of the Communist Party, and who make all appointments to the Sovnarcom, or Council of People's Commissars.

The Sovnarcom corresponds to our Cabinet Council—without the painful necessity of having to consider convenient dates for general elections—and it will be noted that Kalinin, Rykov, Voroshilov and Rudzutak, in addition to being members of the Politbureau, also hold ministerial rank. In England, once the party leaders have been

chosen by the rank and file, the Cabinet becomes supreme, and the party organization acts under its orders in an advisory capacity, its principal duties being to keep in touch with the constituencies and public opinion. In Russia, it is just the reverse; the party organization remains all-powerful and absolutely controls the Cabinet or Sovnarcom.

The French Revolution produced one recognized Sea Green Incorruptible in Robespierre. The Russian Revolution has produced many. The leaders have been called every conceivable name, from blackguards to murderers, by their enemies, but no one has ever succeeded in proving that any one of them has ever made a penny of personal gain out of the exercise of supreme power. In its financial aspect, the character of the leaders of the Communist Party stands on a high moral plane. When Trotsky left for exile, he is said not to have had a penny in his pockets; if Stalin were dismissed to-morrow, he would be without the proverbial *sou*, until the Party found him some other job. Neither is there reason to believe that the party chiefs have placed large sums abroad, in case the tide of fortune should turn against them. Every member, when he is admitted to the Communist Party, is pledged by oath not to accept a salary of more than two hundred and fifty roubles per month. This rule has been most rigorously adhered to. In the subordinate ranks of the party there have been many proved cases of graft and corruption, but the offenders, when discovered, have either been shot or punished with ten years in prison or exile. Thus, the State funds, although they have been dissipated on fantastic economical, and social experiments

and foreign propaganda which have produced deplorable results, have not been diverted into private pockets. Let us give credit where credit is due.

It may be asked how the members of the Politbureau and the Council of People's Commissars can possibly carry out their duties on a salary of twenty-five pounds per month. Truly a Commissar's life is not a happy one. He is spied on by his jealous rivals; he is trusted by few of his colleagues; the slightest backsliding from rigid orthodoxy may send him on a journey to Siberia; he is ill-housed, ill-fed, ill-paid; he has no security for the present, and can lay up no provision for his old age. He is obliged to work morning, noon, and night, until he is summarily dismissed or drops dead in office—probably the happiest end in Russia to-day. Nevertheless, he enjoys certain privileges which count for much in the ocean of universal poverty and misery. He is housed free of charge; his dress-clothes are provided by a benevolent state (otherwise a single suit would consume a month's salary); his motor-car is supplied gratis and he is entitled to an entertainment allowance when the exigencies of his office require him to receive guests. Thus, you may see one of the Commissars of Foreign Affairs (on whom most of the entertainment falls), driving through the streets in a Rolls-Royce, immaculately dressed in clothes from Berlin, London or Paris, and yet you know he has not got a ten-rouble note in his pocket that he can really call his own. It is doubtful if this Spartan severity makes for good government. Extreme poverty leaves little margin for sympathy towards others; life becomes a dog-fight, not a charitable organization; and when the leaders are for

ever living on the edge of a volcano, never knowing whether they may not be cast off at a moment's notice without a penny, they have little feeling towards those whom they govern—who are groaning under similar conditions, minus the dress-suit, the free house, the motor-car and the entertainment allowance. The life of the Commissar is in fact a slightly gilded nightmare.

But it must be remembered that the basic principle of Communism is equal wages all round and the reduction of individual earnings to a minimum, once the State is able to supply the collective products of industry to every member of the community. The proudest moment in the life of the leaders would be the day on which they could proclaim to an astonished world: "We have abolished the private circulation of money altogether in Russia." It is just these fantastic theories which are preventing the expansion and revival of Russia's trade at the present time.

CHAPTER V

ORGANIZATION OF SOCIETY. THE G.P.U.

THE curse of Russia at the present time are its doctrinaire chiefs—the Sea Green Incorruptibles of the Kremlin. The unchanging purity of their political principles, which can no longer be distinguished from pig-headedness in the face of proved facts, has checked the natural evolution of the Revolution from its brutal, iconoclastic stages, into a moderate social democratic régime. The worst offender is Stalin; and Lenin, an excellent psychologist, in his last testament foresaw and placed on record the dangers of employing him as chief of the party. Stalin would rather die than admit that the experiment of State control and elimination of private trading has failed. Yet, probably ninety per cent. of the Bolshevist Party realize the truth, although they dare not express it in public. The revival in trade, and an all-round prosperity, prophesied every succeeding year by the Soviet leaders, seems to be as far off as ever; they are now up against a wall; they cannot go forward and will not retrace their steps and take the well-beaten track. This is what makes the situation appear so hopeless to foreign observers.

In this crisis, men's minds are constantly reverting to the tomb of Vladimir Ilyitch Ulianov, whose shrunken mummified corpse, growing smaller day by day, lies in the temporary tomb in the Red Square. His final resting-

place is still unsettled. Do his apostles believe they may some day be compelled to carry their most holy relic to some far-off land ? Amongst all classes, official and non-official, you hear these words : " Ah, if Lenin had only lived, all would have been different now ! He was a man who never hesitated to change his policy when he saw he had made a mistake." Even those who hated him when he lived, now regard his premature death with regret, and credit him with unfulfilled good intentions. The words of Lenin are the Holy Testament of the Communist Party. No Commissar ever makes a speech in public without quoting him at portentous length. His most faithful, most loving, and most favoured disciple is Stalin himself. Unfortunately, Lenin's testament stopped short in January, 1924, just when he had come to the conclusion that a new economic policy was necessary for the salvation of Russia. The subsequent chapters can only be guessed, for they were never written. His successors in the supreme temple of Communism are too faithful to ignore the change in the Master's views, but they have persistently refused to allow them to emerge from the embryo stage. The Nepman exists as a lasting memorial to Lenin's death-bed confession of failure ; but only to be offered up, just when he is reaching maturity, as a sacrifice on the altar of the Master, who probably called him back to economic life with an entirely different purpose in his mind.

Shakespeare, could he visit Russia at the present time, would surely write : " Superfluous lag the old doctrinaires and revolutionists on the stage." If you walk through the streets of London and look at the transformation which is taking place, you invariably see two notice-boards side

by side. On the one is inscribed the name of the firm which is pulling down the old edifice, and carting away the rubbish; on the other, the name of the firm which is to rebuild a more modern and resplendent building. Reverse these two rôles and London would find herself in the same chaotic state as exists in Russia to-day. For the firm which demolishes cannot reconstruct, and vice versa. If this is true of house building, it is also true of State building. It is rare in history to find that the same men who have brought about a revolution, or who have uprooted a worn out régime, have been successful in drawing up a new constitution which has enjoyed any permanency. In few revolutions have the same characters remained on the stage for a period of eleven years, as in Russia. It speaks volumes for their wonderful powers of organization and self-protection.

Nevertheless, there is a general concensus of opinion, amongst thinking minds in Russia—even amongst many earnest and sincere members of the Communist Party—that the old die-hard revolutionary leaders have outstayed their period of utility; and that the board should now be swept clear for men with more flexible views, who are not tied to livelong academic theories, and discredited shibboleths. Unfortunately, there is only one notice-board up in crumbling Russia—so badly in need of rebuilding and reconstruction—and that bears the name of the old housebreakers who have been at their job for the past eleven years.

The men who are in power to-day are less progressive and more fanatical in their outlook than those who ruled Russia four years ago. They are clinging desperately

to the strict letter of the Karl Marx creed, and shut their eyes blindly to its fallacies and proved failure. In truth, it would appear there are no real statesmen in Russia at the present time—or if there are, they are not allowed to come to the front—but only excellent party chiefs and organizers. Lenin is now universally regarded as the only statesman produced by the Revolution, with Trotsky as a good second ; but the quarrel within the party which finally led to his exile—although somewhat obscure—seems to show that Trotsky was opposed to Lenin's policy of concessions to private trade.

Unfortunately for Russia, the old revolutionary leaders have never enjoyed any practical experience of world finance and economics. They have shown that they know little or nothing about the fundamental laws of supply and demand ; or else they are determined to ignore them. This ignorance of State affairs is hardly to be surprised at. Long years of exile in Siberia, or in writing pamphlets from Switzerland, would hardly be considered an ideal training for a man seeking the post of manager in a business firm.

The government thus finds itself faced by three main difficulties, and will not seek the natural solution, which is to acknowledge the mistakes of the past and openly announce to its followers that it is necessary to readjust the old Communist doctrines to meet modern conditions :

1. The growth of three distinct classes amongst the peasants.
2. The failure of State Industrialism.
3. The impossibility of finding capital for the development of Russia's immense resources under the present fiscal system.

It would appear that the Soviet leaders are far more conscientious in the observance of a party's preconceived programme than are the majority of statesmen in other countries. A political leader, of the standing and class of, say, Mr. Lloyd George, were he in Russia at the present time, would change his party's entire programme to meet the needs of the hour, without a moment's hesitation. In fact he would utilize the very failure of the old system to consolidate the results already won by the Revolution, and place it on a new foundation which would popularize his party with the mass of the people. No one knows better than Mr. Lloyd George how short is the public memory, and how quickly the former utterances of leaders are forgotten by the masses. Opportunism plays a very great rôle in modern democracies, and if ever there was a grand opportunity for a great statesman, it is to be found in Russia at this critical hour. The public will forgive any drastic change in policy, provided their material prosperity is increased. The average Russian cares not two straws about the abstract ideals and ethics of Bolshevism; if they were necessary to win the first two or three rounds of the Revolution, well and good, but he would think not one wit the worse of his leaders, or even consider it illogical, were they to throw over the whole library of Karl Marx-Lenin doctrines and replace them by the time-proved theories of Adam Smith.

There are numbers of men in the party who realize the necessity for the change, and some of them have spoken with great courage; but they are invariably suppressed or made to recant by the leaders before being readmitted to the party fold.

It is, therefore, necessary to look very closely into the real reasons for this pig-headed stubbornness on the part of the Politbureau, headed by Stalin.

I am convinced that it is very largely based on fear. The Bolshevist leaders believe—and probably rightly—that if there is any real concession towards the right—to use a convenient phrase—it will open such a gap in the Bolshevist dyke that they and the entire Communist Party will be swept in the flood of reaction against existing economic methods and oppressive tyranny.

They feel their services would not be required in the reorganization of Russia on a sound financial basis. But, owing to the hate inspired by the Bolshevist persecutions during the past eleven years, there is no such thing as an *otium cum dignitate* for a party, or for a political leader in Russia. The present administration allows no opposition to exist, and it is certain that many years must elapse before Russia can hope to enjoy a constitution which allows of peaceful parliamentary debates, or for the people to choose their leaders by secret ballot. It therefore becomes a question of personal security for the leaders and for their party. If they are supplanted by a more moderate government, it means death or exile, or, as an alternative, a hasty run across the frontier. Therefore, Stalin and his comrades of the Politbureau are unlikely to make any drastic concessions to meet the urgent but unuttered demands of the younger members of the party.

But it may be argued that if the Communist Party controls the G.P.U. and the army, all the lines of communication, the Press and all the other paraphernalia of propaganda, there would be very little danger in intro-

ducing drastic changes, as were foreshadowed by Lenin's dying acts. This should be the case, but it must be remembered that although there is no organized vocal opposition outside of the Communist Party, there is no lack of dissensions within. Some of these reach the ears of the public while others do not. In every revolutionary party the extremists are ever pushing to the front, on the lookout for the slightest backsliding amongst the leaders whose places they desire to fill, from natural ambition which even Communism has been unable to suppress. Therefore, those leaders who might be inclined to move towards the right have ever in mind the unhappy ending to the experiment of the Girondists in the French Revolution. On the other hand, if any change does come, it is almost certain to originate within the party, and not from outside. There is always the chance that a palace revolution may lead to a change in leadership.

By one of those ironies which generally arise when reckless social experiments are entered upon, based on idealistic theories, and not on practical experience, the Communists, who set out with the intention of making all men equal—except the few who were needed to see that equality was maintained—have only succeeded in creating certain privileged classes in the State at the expense of the mass of the people.

The old social orders have been swept away by the Revolution, and the new class distinctions, not based on birth or wealth, but on political principles and utility towards the Bolshevist Party, have taken their place. Social life can now be most conveniently divided into the following strata :

1. The Politbureau, the Sovnarcom, and other Commissars and government officials.

2. The whole of the full-fledged members of the Communist Party.

3. The Noviates or would-be recruits to the Communist Party, who are undergoing a period of training and observation before being accepted as full members of the brotherhood.

It is no easy matter to enter the ranks of the party. If there is the slightest doubt about the purity of your beliefs, you will be put back for a further period of probation, or rejected altogether. But once within the ranks, you are sacrosanct during good behaviour, and enjoy exceptional privileges over all others, and the pick of the good things of life, meagre as they are in Russia, will be at your disposition. Your existence becomes more tolerable. You also have the satisfaction of feeling you belong to the governing class or to the Aristocracy of Universal Equality. On the other hand, you are pledged by oath to observe the ethics of Communism, and must be prepared to resist any temptation to make money out of your privileged position. It will go hard with you if you depart from the tablets of the Ark of the Covenant, for if a Communist is caught in corrupt practices, he is sure to receive a maximum sentence.

The civil authority in every country, whether it be Monarchial or Communist, must have some force on which it can rely to maintain its position, but the police are supposed —in theory—to uphold the laws in the interests of all classes. In Russia there is no such pretence. The Communist Party needs more protection than any other "popular"

government, because it has been founded on the broad, but not very stable, foundation, of an entire nation's confiscated property and loss of civil liberties, and naturally does not enjoy a very extensive popularity.

Thus, there has grown up in the State a hierarchy which exercises a mighty tyrannical power, the like of which is to be found nowhere else in the world to-day. This is the G.P.U., with its countless spies and private army. The chief of the G.P.U. exercises almost sovereign authority, quite independent of the Sovnarcom, and only recognizes the orders of the Politbureau. Menjinsky, the present head of the G.P.U., is neither a member of the Politbureau, nor of the Sovnarcom, the Council of People's Commissars. It is quite conceivable that one day the head of the G.P.U. will become too powerful even for the Politbureau to control. Djerninsky—former chief of the G.P.U.—died within a few hours of denouncing, in a public speech, the follies of the Politbureau. There are some who say he was done away with in consequence. In reality, there is little doubt he died of a sudden attack of heart failure, brought on by his own temerity. Thus, although the Politbureau is the supreme power in the State, it has to be very careful to select a chief on whom it can rely, before placing this titanic machine of tyrannical power in his hands.

In all other respects, the G.P.U. is absolutely independent. In fact, the Commissars stand in as much awe of this sinister organization as do the Russian people. Time and time again, cases have arisen where innocent and harmless people have been arrested, and their friends have sought to intervene on their behalf through Commissars with whom they are on friendly terms. The reply is invariably the

same: "We dare not interfere. In any case, no notice would be taken of our request."

Thus, the G.P.U. exercises sovereign powers within the State, and can arrest, punish, and imprison at its own sweet will, without even consulting the members of the government. Its trials and condemnations take place in secret, and the victims are sent to death, prison or exile without even their nearest relatives having the slightest idea of what has become of them. When a death sentence is pronounced, there is supposed to be an appeal to the Council of People's Commissars, but the latter body would never dare intervene on behalf of a victim, if they received the hint beforehand that the G.P.U. would regard any such intervention unfavourably. The great G.P.U. headquarters in Moscow, a former life insurance office, contains more sinister secrets than any other building in the world. Thousands and thousands have passed to an unknown fate through its portals, and hundreds have been secretly executed in its cellars. It is avoided by all Russians. No passers-by, if they can help it, care to walk along the pavement in front of the building. It is said that in the room where "dangerous" political prisoners are interrogated, there is an ironical notice on the walls setting forth the highly advantageous terms on which they can insure their lives. None, outside of certain chiefs at G.P.U. headquarters, know who are active agents of this organization, and who are not. Whenever you are introduced to a new acquaintance in Russia, some one is sure to whisper in your ear: "Be careful, he is well known to be an agent of the G.P.U.!"

This may, or may not be true, but certainly some of your

most pleasant acquaintances belong to the G.P.U. and will duly report your conversations and movements. They are compelled to do so, whether they like it or not. Some may be described as full-time agents with special permits, which they have only to show to be allowed to pass anywhere. Others belong to No. 2 category, and are compelled to make reports on strangers or on their friends, whenever the G.P.U. chiefs consider they may be in possession of some useful information. The ramifications of this organization extend throughout the whole of Russia. It compares to our Home Office and Scotland Yard combined on a gigantic scale, employing not merely a small highly trained detective force, but myrmidons by the thousand. In fact, it is no exaggeration to say that the entire Russian nation of one hundred and fifty millions is liable to be called upon to act for the G.P.U. at any time that organization considers the services of a particular individual may be useful. But few are strong enough to resist its touching appeal "to serve the State." After all, it is better to be on the right side of the Law; it is dangerous to quarrel with the masters of many legions and more pleasant to preserve your own freedom by giving some purely fictitious or innocent account of your friends' movements and conversations. The amount of nonsensical and childish information which passes through the archives of the G.P.U. must be colossal, and the real labour consists in extracting the gold from the immense amount of perfectly useless ore which is dumped into head-quarters by paid agents, by zealots, and by those who are animated by fear of reprisals against themselves unless they report something, true or false.

Now in all other States except Russia, and, to a lesser

extent, Italy, the civil authority employs civilian police, backed, if necessary, by the armed forces of the crown, in cases of exceptional emergency, to carry out its executive authority, and to preserve order. But the gigantic and monstrous machine of the G.P.U. spurns gendarmes and police, and exercises its authority through a highly trained regular army of its own. The troops of the G.P.U. number about 130,000 men, divided into divisions, brigades and regiments, just like the regular army. This body constitutes the privileged Pretorian Guard of the Soviets. No tsar, emperor or tyrant in history has ever possessed so many household troops. The regular army is chiefly recruited from amongst the peasants, but the troops of the G.P.U. are carefully selected from the ranks of the industrial workers, and from amongst the most ardent and fanatical supporters of Communism. I believe no man can enter these sacred ranks unless he is actually a member of the Communist Party.

This body of picked men, better armed, better equipped, better fed, and better paid than the regular troops, enjoy exceptional privileges together with their wives and families. The Soviet Government relies on them for maintaining itself in power, and it knows well its days are numbered if ever its Pretorian Guard turns against it. Thus, the G.P.U. troops and their families get the pick of the lodgings, and the good things of life: food, clothing and warmth. Their special co-operative establishments are always the fullest stocked with goods; their families seldom have to wait in queues, and whatever shortage there may be in any article, it will be found to disappear last from the shops set aside for the G.P.U. Thus, this body now con-

stitutes the most privileged class in the state. It is the true armed aristocracy of the Revolution and, as long as it remains faithful, it is impossible to see how the government could be overthrown.

Its chief functions are to preserve order in the great centres of population; to hold the railways; to keep a guard on the frontiers, and to provide flying columns for the suppression of sporadic rebellions among the peasants. The government hesitates to employ regular troops in the suppression of local outbreaks because the majority of the soldiers are drawn from the peasant ranks and, naturally, sympathize with them. But the troops of the G.P.U. are animated by no sympathy towards the peasants, and ruthlessly suppress any rebellion in the bud. The peasants, ill-organized, badly armed and widely scattered, can never hope to organize a united attack on the government, and every local outbreak, up to the present, has been suppressed with ease.

CHAPTER VI

THE FAVOURED CLASSES. SOCIAL EXPERIMENTS

OUT of a nation of one hundred and forty to fifty millions, a very trifling percentage enjoys the fruits of the Revolution to the full. There is the Communist Party, numbering from eight hundred thousand to a million; there is the army of the G.P.U., numbering one hundred and thirty thousand; there are the families and dependents of the G.P.U. army, numbering, say, another five hundred thousand; there are the civil agents of the G.P.U., whose numbers it is impossible to estimate; there is a small percentage of the industrial workers, out of the four millions, who have been provided with new dwellings, and clubs, etc. The existence of these classes is not an ideal one, but at least they are better off than the majority of their comrades. At the very outside, one may say that under two millions, or one and a half per cent. of the population have been especially blessed by the efforts of the Soviet Government.

It may be argued that the peasants should be included within the category of those who have reaped well from the upheaval. It is true they have received land; but they are very discontented with the economic conditions. The peasants are disappointed with the Communists, and the latter with the peasants. The poor peasant is unable to earn a livelihood from his land, lacking the necessary industry or implements; and already millions are obliged to earn

some ready money by helping the rich peasants (the Kulaks). This is all wrong in the Bolshevist creed, and is causing the government endless heart-burnings. The middle peasants can, as a rule, produce enough to keep body and soul together, but they have not sufficient surplus to sell to enable them to buy manufactured goods, even if they were available. It is only the Kulaks who can produce a superfluous amount for purchase by the State for the use of the town-dwellers, and the price paid is so low that many peasants complain that the extra labour involved is not worth the while. Everything a peasant possesses, from a cow to a dog, is taxed somehow, and Rykov himself admitted that a Kulak whose net earnings *per annum* amounted to the noble sum of thirteen hundred roubles, was obliged to pay four hundred and ninety roubles in taxes to the State, thus leaving him a balance of only eight hundred roubles for the needs of himself and his family. No wonder the peasants are beginning to look askance at the blessings of Communism which, while giving land with one hand, takes so liberally of the fruits of their labour with the other. There are many who believe that in the end the peasants must win, through sheer weight of numbers, and because Russia is dependent on them for her food supplies, the production of which is falling off owing to the poor prices paid by the government for grain.

Amongst the privileged classes I have named, there is a marked air of improvement in the outward demeanour of the individual, which contrasts strangely with the down-ridden, dejected look of the mass of the population of the cities. The troops of the G.P.U. are a well set-up, prosperous-looking body, who hold themselves proudly with the

air of class superiority. The wives and families of these men also look as if they regarded themselves as belonging to a superior social order to the rest of their countrymen and countrywomen. The regular troops are an improvement, so far as outward appearance goes—I have had no opportunites of seeing them in the field—to the soldiers who composed the armies of the Tsar. Their education is carried on whilst with the colours, and their intelligence has been developed. The government hopes that, by taking care of the material and spiritual needs of the recruits, they will return to their villages as active propagandists and supporters of the new régime. The sailors whom I saw in Leningrad are also very smart on land, but how far this extends to the sea, I am unable to say. They are frequently paraded through the streets, and are invariably made to sing revolutionary songs. Outwardly, they appear a cheerful and contented class. Those industrial workers who have reaped the benefits of the social reforms, intended for the whole nation, are also more cheerful and contented, but this makes the contrast all the more marked with the mass of the industrialists who eke out a bare existence, and with the hundreds of thousands of unemployed who can find no work at all. In spite of the misery and poverty it has brought in its train, the Revolution has had the effect of stimulating the mental outlook of a small percentage of Russians, because the struggle for existence is so terrible that only the fittest can survive.

Amidst the prevailing confusion of ideas and motives, one fact stands out pre-eminently : Russia is being governed to-day in the interests of a party and its supporters, numbering about two millions, and not in the interests of the

hundred and forty million inhabitants. Progress, prosperity, and intercourse with other nations, are all being held up through the profound dread that the slightest change in the policy will let loose a flood of reaction which will bring about the downfall of the organizers of the Revolution. Even allowing for the fact that time counts for little in a semi-oriental nation like Russia, eleven years have passed since the Revolution swept away the old régime; there is no organized opposition in the country; the survivors of Tsarism are dead, in exile or forgotten; yet the ceaseless persecution of certain classes continues with unabated fury.

It is obvious that no government can lay claim to be a national one until it allows once again for economic class distinctions. It has been conclusively proved that these invariably grow up, in spite of ceaseless persecution—physical and financial. The elevation of the under-dog, however admirable in theory, has turned out to be quite unrealizable in practice. No sooner is the under-dog elevated to the premier position than he has the disappointing habit of falling right back again to his prone position on the floor, and he soon becomes fed up with being placed in positions which others are better qualified to fill. The worker finds that, although he may live in some prince's palace, he is less comfortable than in his former hovel. He has also discovered that in spite of his elevation to the premier position in the social scale, food is scarce, and his necessities—butter, tea, sugar, cheese, milk—unobtainable. Thus, although he has been placed on a pedestal, he must climb down and stand in a queue if he desires to obtain his share of the necessities of life. The upper-dogs, who were

thrown to the floor by the Revolution, in spite of the brutality of their masters, refuse to lie prone. They are continually jumping back on to the chairs and sofas, and messing up the social interior of the new Russian ideal house. The Revolution has proved that you may suppress a class but you cannot suppress an intellect, and that, if you endeavour to do so by *force majeure*, the machinery of production comes to a standstill, and the community is faced by famine and ruin. Thus, the government has been obliged to call back the professional technical experts to their aid. Many of them are paid no more than unskilled labour receives ; but they have come to stay, and if they are compelled to work—in order to live—under appalling conditions which offer no rewards commensurate with their skill, they are looking forward to a change in the future.

Followed to its logical conclusion, Communism would mean a cycle of ups and downs for the entire population every decade or two. If you drive down the bourgeoisie and professional classes to the lowest level, after a generation it will be impossible to distinguish them by birth or identification papers, and then, if the policy of elevating the under-dog is persisted in, in the course of a few years the bourgeoisie and the professional classes in their turn will find themselves the pampered children of the State. But, unfortunately for Communism, brains will count. No man of intelligence is content to lie still in the social strata ordained by the government, and to wait for the revolving wheel of time to place him in his turn on top. In spite of the Bolshevists, the young shoots of ambition, hope and intelligence are forcing their way through the tangled mass of weeds under which they have been buried

during the past eleven years. A new bourgeoisie is springing up alongside of the remnants of the old.

The Soviet Government presents an instructive psychological study. The actions of the administration are determined by a mixture of hate, fear, good intentions and a craze for strange social experiments.

Hate is shown by the persistent persecution of all those who are considered the enemies of the Revolution. Eleven years have passed, and ninety-nine per cent. of the survivors of Tsardom now regard the Revolution as a *fait accompli* and have not the slightest intention of risking their lives and liberties by kicking against the pricks. All they care about is to be allowed to live and let live in the long queues with their fellow-citizens.

Fear is manifested by the elaborate precautions taken to safeguard the Bolshevist leaders. The craze for strange social experiments is shown by the persistent endeavour, in spite of repeated failures, to constitute society on the basis of a pyramid placed upside down with the brains at the bottom and the horny-handed sons of toil at the top.

Good intentions are proved by the different social reforms which have been inaugurated, many of which are worthy of praise and careful study.

The Communists, unfortunately for Russia, suffer from a total inability to think or act without prejudice; or to regard themselves not merely as the trustees of a party, but of the nation as a whole. Whatever has been done, whatever is being done, whatever will be done, must be carried out in the interests of a class. The charm of doing a good work is entirely spoilt unless it can be accompanied by a declaration that it is not intended for the survivors

of the two pariah classes, the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy. There are many men in the party who genuinely believe they have a sacred mission to fulfil in endeavouring to improve the lot of the workers. Yet they have no feeling towards the upper and middle classes. I have visited public buildings, new model dwellings, hospitals, and prisons, with men who are just as proud of their work as an architect who has designed a wonderful building, or a painter who has produced a masterpiece. But the greater the pride in achievement, the greater the satisfaction that it will not benefit the community as a whole, but only a class. This attitude is probably explained by persecutions that the new pioneers have suffered in the past, by the memory of long years of prison and exile, and by the blasted hopes of their early years.

The Communists set out to build up a model Paradise for eighty-five per cent. of the entire population; the remaining fifteen per cent.—aristocrats, intellectuals, bourgeoisie—were to be destroyed or to disappear. Unfortunately, the achievement has fallen far short of the programme, owing to faulty economic reasoning; with the result that no more than one or two per cent. enjoy the blessings which were intended for eighty-five per cent. Now you hear on all sides, "The proletariat have already lost the Revolution." There is a lot of truth in this, if the issue is judged by what was promised, compared with what has been accomplished. The peasants have their land, but this is a doubtful benefit if they have no money with which to purchase manufactured goods, and if they are taxed to death.

The industrial workers have hardly been more fortunate;

their expectations have not been realized, although those who knew Russia before the War, declare their lot is better off than under the Tsars. But here, again, only the fringe of this army of 4,000,000 workers enjoys to the full the advantages State control is supposed to confer. Unskilled labour in the government factories is only paid 60 roubles per month, a sum equivalent to about five pounds at the stabilized rate of exchange prevailing in Russia. A worker must pay about ten roubles for his two rooms. The floorage space allowed each person in Moscow is only six cubic metres. The majority are housed in dwellings which are totally unsuitable for the purpose. Big houses have been divided up to hold fifty families, but there is a common kitchen which leads to endless friction; sanitary and hygienic arrangements are usually primitive. Thus, when his rent has been deducted, there is only fifty roubles left the worker for the purchase of food and clothes for himself and his family. But, as the standard of living is much lower in Russia than anywhere outside of the Orient, the Russian can struggle on, although the majority have a half-starved, down-trodden, half-frozen mien, the appearance, in fact, of the ill-nourished. Fifty roubles might suffice if the worker was sure of obtaining the necessities of life. But he is not; he must wait in queues for his bread and vegetables (bread riots had started in Moscow before I left); tea, butter and milk are almost unobtainable. Vodka can be bought readily and it would be unwise for the government to suppress this traffic until there is a return to normal conditions. Vodka on Saturday night provides the one ray of warmth and sunshine in the lives of millions. Clothes are terribly expensive, very scarce, and of miserable quality.

The workers' sick benefits are insured by the State, and the hospitals are capable of looking after an average number of sick, but could hardly meet the demands of a serious epidemic.

The worker, however, who has a job and belongs to the aristocracy of labour, is more of a man than he was under the Tsars. In spite of many disabilities and hardships, he feels that he belongs to a privileged class, and, even if his lot is hard, he is better off than those who were formerly his masters. It is only fair to add that many responsible Communist chiefs realize that wages are too low and would like to raise them all round, but this is impossible in the present critical state of the national finances. The industrial workers are now being gradually put back on piece-work in all government factories; wages paid by time have been found to offer no incentive to increased production. Piece-work was formerly denounced by Communists as a brutal method of the capitalist to sweat his workers!

In some districts the workmen are provided with clubs—built out of local rates—where they can rest, smoke and play cards, and where they are encouraged to discuss politics. As usual, everything is reversed in Russia. An English employer would be delighted if his workmen were so prosperous and content that they had neither the time nor the inclination to take part in political discussions. Recently, there was a lament in *Pravda* (Truth); the Commissar in charge of a factory declared, with tears in his eyes, that during the past half-year only twenty per cent. of his workers had taken any part in meetings of their local Soviet. He added that immediate steps were being taken to stir up the enthusiasm of the workers.

The housing problem is one of the most serious in Russia. The private houses and buildings which have been taken over by the State are structurally quite unfit for conversion into apartments. The upkeep is expensive, and the interiors have to be divided into numerous flats, regardless of recognized rules for light and air. One American writer described Moscow as an "insanitary rabbit warren," a very apt description. The rents are so low that the House Committee charged with the management have no money with which to carry out any but the absolutely essential repairs. Thus chimneys, roofs, and façades are crumbling to decay in both Moscow and Leningrad. It is no exaggeration to say that in a few years the majority of the houses in the cities will not be worth the cost of repairing, even if the necessary money can be found.

It is the policy of the government to induce the workers to retire from the centres, and crowded districts of towns like Moscow and Leningrad to the open suburbs, where there is more room and more air. But houses must be provided to replace the wooden shacks. In the suburbs of both Moscow and Leningrad some very fine workmen's apartment houses have already been built, which compare favourably with those in any other country. I visited two of these, which contained a population of nine thousand persons, who may be considered amongst the most favoured of the proletariat. The flats consist of two rooms with a small kitchen where cooking is done by electricity. There are steam baths, and all the latest conveniences. The demand for these dwellings is tremendous, and the workers sometimes come to bloodshed in their efforts to obtain possession. The rent for an apartment of two rooms and a

kitchen is about ten dollars a month, with central heating, electric light and electricity for cooking thrown in. But with such low rents it is almost impossible to repay the capital spent on these buildings, except over a long term of years. The freehold of these apartments can also be purchased by annual instalments spread over a period of forty years, and the price for two rooms and a kitchen is about six thousand roubles or three hundred pounds. This is a distinct return to the right of individual ownership.

These apartment houses are an admirable example of the better side of the Soviet administration, coming under the category of good intentions, but as with almost every social experiment, only an infinitesimal percentage of the workers is benefited. The government wishes to house millions of industrial workers in a like manner, but where is the money to come from, as long as the present fiscal system remains ? The building programme is never kept up to date owing to the shortage of funds. Thus, while the suburbs of cities like Moscow and Leningrad are going ahead, and the wretched wooden hovels of the workers being replaced by modern up-to-date apartment houses, the old streets in the centre, and radiating to the suburbs, are falling every year into a state of more dismal decay. But the workers are gradually, if very slowly, migrating to the suburbs.

CHAPTER VII

THE PROBLEM OF THE RENEWAL OF RELATIONS

"COME back, my love. It was all a misunderstanding." This notice, such as you may read in the agony column of a newspaper, represents the attitude of the Soviet Government in regard to the all-important question of the renewal of relations. The Government would promise anything if only Great Britain and the United States would send ambassadors to Moscow. It might even, after the lessons of the past, do its best to observe its promises. For instance, it would be far more important for the Soviet Government to have a British Envoy in Moscow than to indulge in a certain amount of illicit propaganda in England. The Soviet would willingly make a bargain along these lines, because the Politbureau realizes that, so far as Europe is concerned, the World Revolution is now a dream of the past, and that it can no longer hope to make wholesale conversions to Communism in England. On the other hand, if the British Government makes it a condition precedent to the renewal of relations that all propaganda must stop throughout the British Empire, it is difficult to see how the Soviets could accept any such proposal in good faith, if they did keep to their bargain. They have not abandoned the hope of a world Revolution in Asia. They are so heavily involved in commitments in India and the Far East, that it would be impossible for them to stop the great cam-

paign without seriously damaging their own position at home.

Thus, the question of renewal of relations should be considered from a new angle. The condition precedent of "stop all propaganda" is, in the very nature of things, unfulfillable if obtainable, and, therefore, we should judge the issue from a fresh orientation, viz :—Whether it is in our interests to renew relations, knowing full well that propaganda against the British Empire will continue, whether we do or whether we do not. Sentiment should not be allowed to enter in ; the issue should be judged as a cold-blooded business proposition.

The Soviet Government desires renewal for a variety of reasons :

(1) The government is as sensitive as a climbing *nouveau riche* about its social standing amongst the great powers. There is nothing it feels more keenly than being ostracized by some governments, and classed as a semi-Asiatic administration alongside of the Mongols, Chinese and Tartars. This feeling persists as long as the two great Anglo-Saxon peoples refuse recognition.

(2) The standing of the Soviet Government amongst the powers who are represented in Moscow is lowered as long as we remain away.

(3) Our refusal to recognize the Soviets lowers the authority and prestige of the government in the eyes of millions of Russians.

(4) It weakens the stability of the government because our action causes many to believe that we regard the Soviets as only a passing phase in Russian life, and that we are waiting for their overthrow before renewing relations.

(5) The chances of the government obtaining credits abroad are seriously jeopardized as long as the two main money markets of the world have no official representatives in Russia.

For these reasons, the Soviet Government would be willing to strike a bargain on almost any terms; but even if the men who signed an agreement were sincere in their intentions to observe it, it is certain that the bulk of the Communist Party would never consent to any such proposal, or to scrap the machinism of propaganda, which is ever at work.

The issue, if it is to be judged on its merits, should be considered under three heads: (*a*) The interests of British trade; (*b*) The joint interests of the European Powers who are engaged in a common struggle against Communism; (*c*) The interests of the vast majority of the Russian people, who are hostile to Bolshevism.

We cannot ignore our own political interests, but it is doubtful whether they would be affected one way or the other. Many arguments can be produced both for and against, but from the practical standpoint, the only real advantage would be that we should remain in closer touch with all that is passing in Russia, provided the right men were attached to the Mission; on the other hand, it is almost impossible to induce a Russian to go near a legation or embassy. Fear is too great, and the millions remain isolated from all except officials.

Figures show there has been a falling off in British trade with Russia since our Mission was withdrawn. On the other hand, it is difficult to say whether this is due to withdrawal, or to a falling off in the purchasing power of

the Russian Government, owing to the acute financial crisis through which it is passing. Last year the government was compelled to send gold to Berlin, to balance the account between its imports and exports. It is difficult for the government to settle differences by cash payments, except at great loss, because there is no common rate in Europe for the rouble, which varies from about 9.45 to the £ in Moscow, to 24 to the £ in Riga. The government has stabilized its currency at home, but it has not succeeded in making the money markets of the world accept its own valuation. This is what renders international business so difficult. Whether British trade would really benefit, would seem to depend more on the financial recovery of Russia than on recognition. But the Soviet Government feels its financial position would be strengthened; and then the trade of both countries would benefit. The question of concessions, which must be dealt with in a separate article, is closely bound up with recognition. The Soviet Government is throwing open concessions to foreigners on a vast scale but, for the moment the fish are not biting very readily, as there are too many concealed hooks about the bait to please those accustomed to swim in the calmer capitalistic waters of international finance. But if any nation suddenly gets over its nervousness, and invests money in Russia on a large scale, then others are sure to follow. At present, the Germans and the Americans are the most active in this field. Should the British capitalist also decide to join in the hunt, he will certainly be handicapped by having no official representative in Moscow to safeguard—as far as is possible—his interests. But every agreement for a concession must be examined and dealt with on its own merits. I have before me the

general terms and conditions under which the Soviet Government is prepared to deal, but they contain many pitfalls for the unwary. At present, British subjects can negotiate for concessions on equal terms with those of any other nation, because the Soviet Government is prepared to deal with friend or foe, in its efforts to attract foreign capital; but should there come a sudden rush of concessionaires from many nations, then, those countries which are represented in Moscow are more than likely to obtain preferential treatment.

The Germans are at present engaged in negotiating a fresh Tariff and Trade Agreement with the Soviets. This is sure to contain clauses dealing with concessions, safeguarding their subjects, and providing for independent arbitration in the event of disputes. Should we, in due course, follow this example, why, then a British Mission in Moscow would be of great value in assisting individuals to negotiate agreements with the Soviet Government. But all these considerations and arguments are dependent on the far greater issue: whether it is practical and profitable or not to lend Russia capital under present conditions. This subject I shall deal with later.

Amongst the Diplomatic Corps in Moscow there is almost as great a desire for the return of the British Mission as is shown by the Soviet Government. The various embassies and legations have felt in an uncertain and unnatural position since Sir Robert Hodgson left. The collective weight of European representatives has been weakened, and there is no longer a common European policy. There is a feeling that no one is living in a world of realities, as long as Great Britain and the United States stand aloof. Some of

the smaller border states feel they have been placed in a precarious position. First-class powers like France and Italy, and, in a lesser degree, Germany, are of course in a different position. They would all like to see us back, but they are naturally powerful enough to stand on their own and to safeguard their own interests without our aid.

I refer especially to the border states : Poland, Lithuania, Esthonia and Latvia, which are the most interested in the Russian problem. Only recently separated from the old Empire of the Tsars, the three last are quite incapable of resisting any aggressive action of the Soviet Government. The Russian armies could walk into their open frontiers and occupy their capitals without encountering any real resistance. Poland is more powerful and could probably offer a more formidable resistance to a Russian invasion than she could in 1922, when the enemy arrived at the gates of Warsaw. But the small Baltic States no longer feel the same security, now that we have broken off diplomatic relations. They consider our Mission had a stabilizing influence, and that the Soviet Government would remain on its good behaviour as long as we were present to act as a check. The Baltic States now lack the moral support of the British representative.

The departure of Sir Robert Hodgson and his staff created a breach in the diplomatic dyke which has not yet been filled. There is no longer the same sense of reality or security within the compound.

I have talked to some diplomats who consider our Mission should be brought back in the interests of the millions who are silently suffering in Russia. A diplomat of eminence,

who has passed the whole period of the Revolution in Russia, explained his point of view as follows :

" All the embassies and legations regretted the departure of the British Mission because they felt that the solidarity and continuity of European policy, *vis-à-vis* to the Soviet Government, was destroyed when England broke off relations. The presence of the British was a guarantee of peace and it has thrown the future relations between all European countries and Russia once again into the melting-pot. The smaller States: Lithuania, Esthonia and Latvia, adjacent to the Russian frontier, have lost the sense of security they enjoyed as long as the British Mission remained in Moscow. They feel they may become the victims of a sudden surprise attack by the Soviet armies.

" The departure of the British has put back the clock of progress in Russia. At the moment when the country appeared to be settling down, and when there was a pronounced movement towards more moderate methods and a more sane economic policy, it gave the reactionaries in the government the excuse and opportunity to undertake severe measures against all those classes they considered in any way inimical towards the new régime. It also led to a number of executions and to most repressive measures towards thousands of innocent people. It gave the government the opportunity to proclaim to the people that Russia was once again threatened by foreign aggression, headed by England. In this way the Soviet was able to rally many who were in reality hostile to the Bolshevists ; and it offered an excuse to eliminate those groups within the party who were inclined to favour a more moderate policy. It did much to prolong the existence of Com-

munism, and brought about a set-back in the progress of the N.E.P. (New Economic Policy). There followed a repercussion in propaganda abroad, as this rises *pro rata* as the Government's difficulties increase at home. None of the leaders believe any longer that a World Revolution is possible. The aim of their propaganda is not wholesale conversion, but to maintain centres of unrest in foreign countries, which can be utilized in the event of war to bring pressure on the working classes to stop the production of material, hinder recruiting, etc.

"The Politbureau leads the party to believe that it is still active in foreign countries, as it would be a confession of failure to admit the World Revolution had failed. The presence of a British Mission in Moscow would do much to stabilize the political situation, as the Soviet Government is kept in a continuous sense of unrest and anxiety as long as England and America are not represented. The government does not like to be regarded as being outside the pale of European civilization. It is doubtful, however, if the return of the Mission would make any great difference to British trade.

"The Revolution must not be regarded as a passing phase. It has come to stay, but there will be a gradual evolution towards more moderate methods and a sounder economic policy. It is, therefore, useless for England to wait for a sudden change that will not come. Her return would probably hasten the evolution. The problem is biological; there are two centrifugal forces now struggling for mastery in Russia; the old Communist Party with its doctrine of State control is engaged in a life and death struggle with those who favour a return to the old economic

laws. There can be little doubt as to who will win in the end. The return to sound economics received a severe set-back when the British Mission left.

"The development of State socialism throughout all countries is a factor which no government can afford to ignore. It is in the interests of all nations that the evils engendered by the Russian Revolution should be known and understood by the working classes throughout Europe. As long as England is separated from Russia, the Communists can appeal to the British workers, by declaring they are not understood ; and that it is merely the hate of the capitalist which has brought about the breach. Whereas, with free intercourse between the two peoples, the working classes would speedily discover the difference between the ideals and methods of moderate socialists, and the evils of Bolshevism."

I have quoted these views at some length. They may not meet with favour in all quarters, but they undoubtedly contain much truth and common sense. The weakest link in the argument lies in the words quoted : "The presence of a British Mission in Russia would probably do much to stabilize the political situation."

There are many in this country who will argue that it is not in our interests to stabilize the Soviet Government. But if we can assist a more speedy evolution by renewing relations, the whole subject is worth reconsidering.

The real obstacle in the way of a renewal of relations is not so much the question of the cessation of propaganda as knowledge of what happened after the departure of Sir Robert Hodgson and his staff. Those terrible events must naturally cause our Foreign Office to hesitate before again

imperilling the lives of Russian subjects. The terror broke out afresh and the Soviet Government, in its blind fury and disappointment, avenged itself on innocent persons whom it accused of having relations with our Mission. Twenty were shot and God knows how many others were imprisoned or sent to Siberia. Even the poor old charwoman employed at the Mission was sent into exile and has remained there ever since, although when I was in Moscow I heard the government had consented to her return. All those who were executed had never been near our Mission and were quite unknown to Sir Robert Hodgson and his staff. But this mattered not at all; they were members of the pariah classes, bourgeoisie or aristocrat, and were executed for revenge. Now, supposing our Mission returned and, within a few months was once again compelled to leave, what guarantee have we that the same thing would not happen again? Naturally, no government likes to risk the lives of innocent people by sending a representative to Moscow, under such conditions.

The Soviet Government now fully realizes the colossal blunder it made by these executions and persecutions. It knows the memory of them is the chief obstacle in the way of recognition at the present time, and would give almost anything to undo the past. But nothing can bring back the dead. If we could only obtain guarantees against similar barbarities in the future, I would consider them of far greater importance than a promise to stop propaganda. But even if the government pledged its word, the G.P.U. would not take the slightest notice. It would continue to arrest, and punish all those whom it suspected of having any relations with our Mission, quite irrespective of the govern-

ment or the Foreign Office. The G.P.U. would use our presence as an excuse for wholesale arrests.

On every occasion a Russian official has spoken to me on the question of recognition, I have always made him the same reply: "How can you expect us to send a mission after what happened when Sir Robert Hodgson left. You shot twenty perfectly innocent people and imprisoned hundreds of others. Is our government justified in risking the lives and liberties of Russian subjects by sending a mission to a country where such barbarities are permitted?"

No one of them has ever been able to make a reply. They try and shift the issue by declaring that those who were executed were spies, in spite of Sir Robert Hodgson's declarations; but they know quite well this is untrue. Now they wish the past to be forgotten, and to make a fresh start. But murder is not so quickly forgiven in England as it is in Russia.

It is well that the life led by the Diplomatic Corps in Russia should be understood, and that no illusions should exist as to its utility. Since the departure of Sir Robert Hodgson and the subsequent reprisals, no Russian has ever dared enter an embassy or legation with the exception of the Commissars who are invited on official occasions, and the few officials of the Foreign Office whose duties render such intercourse essential.

No Russian will meet a member of a legation outside, through fear of being compromised, and there are but few who would care to attend a secret meeting in some neutral house. Thus the Diplomatic Corps is absolutely isolated, and the only social life consists in gatherings between themselves. The only occasions on which they ever associate

with Russians, apart from the few I have named, is at the receptions given by the Commissars for Foreign Affairs. Here they will meet only members of the party and government officials belonging to other departments.

Thus, a mission has little chance of getting in touch with the Russian people, or of finding out what is really taking place below the surface of officialdom. The embassies and legations are like isolated plague spots with a notice over each door : " He who enters here leaves hope behind." A Russian subject is, in fact, condemning himself to death or exile if he passes these portals. The movements of everyone who enters or leaves are carefully watched, and within a few hours a Russian, unless authorized to enter, would find himself being cross-examined at the headquarters of the G.P.U.

Thus, being thrown back on their own resources, the members of the Diplomatic Corps find themselves living in a little circle where they can only meet one another, and they seldom encounter a new face unless a visitor happens to pass through. No wonder many of them become tired of Moscow after a short stay, and long for a change.

Social life is, indeed, painfully restricted ; the amusements are few, and the opportunities of doing useful work scarcer still. Accredited to a nation of one hundred and fifty millions of people, the members of the Diplomatic Corps never meet or speak with a single Russian except the few officials of the Foreign Office or of other government departments.

Since my visit to Russia the General Election of May, 1929, has taken place, and the MacDonald administration

has succeeded Mr. Baldwin's, but without a clear majority in the House of Commons. One of its first acts was to announce that it would immediately endeavour to renew relations with Russia on certain conditions. This means that Mr. MacDonald is prepared to send a Minister or agent to that country, and to allow a Russian representative to be attached to the Court of St. James's. We do not know what the " certain conditions " are, but they are not difficult to guess. The Soviet Government must promise it will desist from all political propaganda in this country, and throughout the British Empire. Mr. MacDonald and the sane men in the Socialist Party, together with the permanent officials in the Foreign Office, are perfectly aware that the Soviet will promise anything without having the slightest intention of desisting from propaganda. But if a promise is made officially, the MacDonald administration can save its face by declaring that it has taken every safeguard possible under the circumstances.

I am of opinion that it is in the best interests of this country, as long as a Socialist Government is in office, that England should be represented at Moscow. It was not necessary for Mr. Baldwin to have to prove to his supporters that the fixed policy of the Soviet Government remains the same to-day as it has been for the past eleven years, viz., to smash the British Empire. On the other hand, it is very necessary for Mr. MacDonald to keep the facts continually before his immediate supporters, in order to discredit the extremists in his party.

As long as we have no relations with Russia, the extremists —headed by Maxton, Kirkwood, Wheatley, Cook, and Co.— are able to say " unemployment is largely due to the falling

off of our trade with Russia since we broke off relations." This is an excellent theory to put forward on an election platform, but in practice it will be found that the renewal of relations will make but little difference to British trade, unless the MacDonald government is prepared to make long term credits to Russia to enable that country to purchase British goods with British money. This was the policy which largely led to the downfall of the Socialists in 1924. They are hardly likely, faced as they are with an adverse majority in the House, to jeopardize their position by bringing it forward again. How in the first place can they hope to obtain the money? It can hardly be taken out of revenue, in the present state of our national finances, for even the extreme Socialists or Communists are hardly likely to consent to abandon some of their pet schemes in order to advance money to Russia. It is difficult to see how it could be raised in the open market by way of loan, unless it is backed by the guarantee of the British Government. Such a step would be opposed by every Conservative, and by the majority of the Liberals. Neither the Socialists nor Mr. Lloyd George would dare appeal to the country with such a plank in their platform, when there are over a million unemployed who are a first charge on our resources. Trade with Russia must stand or fall on its own merits. It would appear, therefore, that the Soviet Government will be sadly disillusioned if it imagines that recognition will be followed by an immediate long term loan. We have too many claims at home, and throughout the Empire, to lend money to those who make no bones of the fact that they are out to destroy the British Empire. If Russia is to obtain long term credits, the League of Nations will be the proper

medium for carrying through such a deal, so precarious to the lender. The terms of repayment will have to be drastically guaranteed, and it is highly improbable that the nations will ever agree to make Stalin and Co. loans without some settlement of the old debt. We must first see an entire change in Russia's economic and world policy. Nothing would be more absurd, risky, or illogical than for capitalist nations to lend money, for the sake of stimulating trade, to the Communists, who are bent upon the destruction of all those principles in finance on which capitalism is based.

With a clever and honest representative in Russia, Mr. MacDonald will soon be able to prove to his sane and moderate followers the hopelessness of any close *liaison* with the Soviets. He will receive practical proofs with every despatch bag of the dishonesty, insecurity, and double-dealing of the Politbureau. Propaganda throughout India and other British dependencies will become easier to combat if Mr. MacDonald is in a position to say, "We renewed relations under the conditions that this propaganda should cease. The Soviet Government has not kept its word. It is useless, as you can see for yourselves, for us to attempt closer relations or to lend money to those who are incapable of sticking to a bargain."

He will be placed in an even stronger position *vis-à-vis* to the extremists and Communists in his own party. He will have in his hands the official proofs of what is taking place, received from his own representatives in Moscow; whereas at present the friends of the Bolshevists can turn to him and say, "Why don't you give these people a chance? They are perfectly honest, and have no designs against the

British Empire. All they desire is to enjoy equal opportunities for trade with other nations whose governments are as far removed from British constitutionalism as their own."

As a final advantage—although this is somewhat doubtful on account of the prevailing conditions—it may be easier to keep an eye on Soviet intrigues and activities throughout the British Empire. But it is hardly likely, after what happened on the departure of Sir Robert Hodgson, when twenty innocent people were executed and hundreds imprisoned, that many Russians are likely to come forward and risk their lives by acting as British Secret Service Agents. However, in spite of these handicaps, an intelligent observer can learn much that will be of inestimable value to his government. Constant association with other foreign representatives in Moscow will serve a very useful purpose. Much secret information trickles through in small quantities to some of the legations, especially those on the Russian frontier—Poland, Latvia, Esthonia, Lithuania—and a British representative on friendly terms with his colleagues will enjoy the benefit of the common pot of ascertained facts.

But the idea of the MacDonald administration, or any other, offering the pipe of peace and amity to Russia is absurd, almost childish to anyone who knows that country. There is no party in England so cordially despised by the Communists in Russia as the British Socialists. Our full-fledged Communists are regarded with even greater contempt. A Communist who has not shed blood, and who is seeking to reach his goal through constitutional procedure, is an object of contempt and ridicule in Russia.

Violence, annihilation of your opponents, and a ruthless destruction of the pariah classes—the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie—are the only methods recognized by the Russian Bolshevists.

They laugh at our milksop Socialists, who declare they have been brought into power by the additional votes of five million flappers. They are completely beneath contempt. Stalin relies on keeping himself in office by oppressing flappers, by disfranchising an entire nation, and by holding 150 millions in bondage by means of a party-owned private army. MacDonald relies on the free vote of an entire nation, on world peace, and the abolition of all armaments—if the other nations are willing. The Russian Communist and the MacDonald Socialist are as far removed as the two poles, and the proposed renewal of the *liaison* between the two will at once set ablaze all the old hates, and lead to fresh subjects of dissension.

The Soviet has a far greater admiration for the Conservative Party than for the Socialists. They regard Mr. Baldwin with indifference because they consider him a true, weak and futile democrat in the same category as MacDonald. But they regard men like Mr. Winston Churchill and Lord Birkenhead with very different feelings. They only respect those whom they honestly believe have tyrannical characters, who would, if the conditions were favourable, establish dictatorships and really take all the power into their own hands. I have never heard a Russian Bolshevist express the slightest desire for Mr. MacDonald or any of the Labour Leaders, or back benchers like Maxton, Kirkwood, and Wheatley, to visit Russia, but over and over again I have heard prominent officials reiterate

Litvinov's words, "Why don't Churchill and Birkenhead visit our country. They have nothing to fear. We would give them the time of their lives."

There is something pathetic, almost tragic, in the blind belief that certain English Socialists and Communists have in the benefits they are going to derive from this renewal of relations with the followers of Karl Marx. They are seeking friends outside their own country with whom to fraternize, and whose help they imagine they require in carrying into practice their ideals in our own country. Little do they realize the hatred and contempt with which they are regarded by those whose friendship they are seeking. They are being cultivated and tolerated by the Bolshevists, not through sympathy and love, but because their seducers wish to borrow their money, and to have the opportunity of placing agents in our midst to carry out the programme of destruction on which they are bent. The common sense of the average British worker will preserve our Empire from this foul contamination, but meanwhile many false hopes are being raised, and much energy is being wasted by this desire to associate with those, who, were they to assume the reins of government in this country, would be the first to utterly destroy those who have placed their childish trust in them. A government which seeks political support outside the boundaries of its own people has no firm basis on which to stand. It must automatically bring about its own downfall. The government which holds out the hand of friendship and financial support to these Bolshevized Europasians, when it has all our Dominions with which to deal, is not likely to remain in power for long. But there is no reason to believe that Mr. MacDonald is

likely to jeopardize his position by any such acts of folly. Let him send an honest representative, with the best interests of the British Empire at heart, to Russia. He can only receive reports which will strengthen his hands in dealing with the misguided fanatics within his own party.

CHAPTER VIII

EDUCATION. PRISONS. THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

ONE of the most criminal neglects of the Tsars was the failure to produce any facilities for education for the mass of the people. This omission was largely responsible for the excesses which prevailed everywhere in the early years of the Revolution. The people, when law and order collapsed, behaved like ignorant savages; they knew no better. The Soviet Government is credited with the good intention of establishing compulsory education for all children. But the road is long and hard. The idea is sound, but the curriculum would hardly find favour amongst modern educationalists. Too much of the time of the scholars, which could be better employed in learning some useful profession, is devoted to political propaganda in its most virulent form. The government is less interested in their moral and material welfare or in teaching them a profession which will help them in after life, than in instilling into them the entire Karl Marx-Lenin programme, omitting to note the changes which came over Lenin's views in the last years of his life. It is universal education of a people in the interests of a political party, in which individualism is strictly eliminated. Russia is crumbling under Communism, and the government is reluctantly compelled to admit that its doctrines and ethics have failed to take root among any substantial section of the Russian people. The leaders are, therefore, concen-

trating their efforts on the coming generation, realizing they have failed in their great proselytizing mission to the present one. They hope in the future to produce a race of converts to the new faith out of those who have never known any other political creed or social existence, except that which Bolshevism permits. In other words, the idea of an individual existence, apart from what the State offers, or of individual ambition to raise oneself from the common ruck, is to be eliminated from the rising generation, who are being taught that they are merely servants of an all-sovereign State, which will provide for their material needs in return for placid obedience. Thus, no Russian child can ever hope to enjoy a future materially superior to his comrades, whatever his abilities, unless perchance he should happen to become a Commissar. Hatred against the bourgeoisie and the capitalist naturally forms part of the curriculum. The children are taught that these are the pariah classes who prey on the masses, and who must never be allowed to reappear in Russia. Thus, while State industrialization and control of all men and all materials has already been proved a costly failure, it is retained as the principal doctrine to be taught in all the schools throughout Russia.

It is too early to say how this experiment will succeed. It must have its effects, because a new generation, removed from parental control, which has never known any other existence except under the patronage, guidance and control of the State, will not miss, to the same extent, the charms of individualism or the fulfilment of natural ambition. But, probably, this forcible feeding in political beliefs from an early age will not have the effect that is anticipated. The

moment the student is released from his studies, and finds himself engaged in a struggle for bare existence, he is likely to analyse closely the advantages of the system under which he has been educated, and to ask, "Where is the Promised Land which was held out to me when I was at school?" The only hope of converting future generations, is for Communism to succeed before this generation reaches maturity. The Soviet Government must provide a more pleasing outlook for the young, and must place Russia on a far higher plane of material prosperity than exists at present; otherwise the future generations will find Bolshevism just as ugly and unattractive as it is to the mass of the Russian people to-day.

At the present time, the Government lacks both the money and the teachers to educate more than an infinitesimal, almost negligible, percentage of the Russian children. Lunacharsky, the Minister of Education, frankly admits that the entire government programme has broken down. Therefore, the original scheme of training a new generation of young Communists is now confined to a very small proportion of the children in the big cities. The peasants will not be affected in any way. The next generation will be as ignorant as the present, and this is likely to continue for many decades.

Formerly there were hordes of orphan children abandoned by their parents, or illegitimates, who roamed the streets of Moscow and of Leningrad like packs of wolves. They earned a precarious livelihood by organized begging and stealing, and by "hold-ups" of pedestrians in isolated streets. They formed themselves into predatory bands, each under its special chief, and became a positive danger to those who

refused to pay them toll. They lived like savages, sleeping in the parks or in railway stations, or in any unoccupied buildings they could find. In the winter time they sought warmth by sleeping alongside boilers used for heating, or dug themselves "igloos" in the snow. They sank into a state of animal life which has probably not been seen since the passage of Ghengis Khan's conquering hordes of Mongols and Tartars, who utterly destroyed the cities through which they passed.

The affair became such a public scandal that the government was at length forced to take drastic measures. A clean sweep was made in Moscow and Leningrad of these young wolf-cubs. God knows what has become of them. It is said they have been split up and distributed throughout the country in different towns and villages. I should say, judging by what I saw in Moscow, that this winter the packs of abandoned children will once again collect in Moscow and Leningrad, as they will come in from the surrounding villages to escape from cold and famine. The story is a horrible one, a tragic commentary on the effects of Communism.

The whole of the younger generation who pass through the Soviet State Schools are being brought up as atheists. Freedom of religious beliefs is supposed to be guaranteed by the Soviet Constitution, but no religious instruction is allowed to be given in the schools and public institutions. The ceaseless persecutions which the Orthodox Greek Church has suffered, during the past eleven years, have not, however, succeeded in eliminating the former Christian spirit amongst the great mass of the Russian people. It is calculated that over 10,000 bishops and priests were put to

death in the early years of the Revolution. The lot of the survivors is hard and pitiful. There are no longer any endowments for the cathedrals and churches. These have been confiscated by the State. The priests can only carry on the services and offices with the utmost difficulty, and are entirely dependent on the charity of their flocks for food, heat, and clothing; but the flocks are starving. No class is more poverty-stricken or leads a more miserable existence than the priests. It is the cardinal desire of the Soviet Government to abolish Christianity altogether in Russia, but up to the present the task has been found impossible. The simple faith of the mass of Russian peasants stands like a rock against which the red waves of atheism break in vain.

What is going to be the effect of this official education in atheism throughout the State Schools on the younger generation? It is too early to say. The Soviet Government offers no substitute for the Christian faith except science, and this is hardly likely to satisfy the spiritual needs of the new generation when it reaches maturity, and passes out of State control. The majority will probably revert to the faith of their forefathers with renewed and invigorated fervor, when they find themselves cast loose in the joyless, soulless, enslaved land, over which the Soviet atheist government rules.

Nothing is more curious to study than the attitude of the Bolshevists towards crime. The government prides itself on its efforts to reform prisoners and make useful citizens. In consequence, in some ways the Soviet system is infinitely more humane than that which exists in any other country; and the results should be carefully studied by all

interested in criminal reform. But this leniency is never applied to political offenders. The Communists have apparently a sneaking sympathy towards wrong-doers, provided they spring from the proletariat, and have not been indicted for political offences. The death penalty has been abolished in Russia—except for political crimes—but the latitude is so wide that almost any murderer could be included within this category if the authorities really wished to get rid of him. Ten years is the maximum sentence for murder or for any other crime, and bribery or embezzlement by members of the Communist Party is considered a far more reprehensible offence than the killing of a wife or a mother-in-law !

I visited a No. 1 prison, i.e., for the worst crimes, where long sentences are served. There were also a number of political prisoners confined there, but I was not allowed to see them. As they did not come under the category of being particularly dangerous they received the same treatment as the civil offenders—according to the head gaoler. They told me of one old nobleman, sixty-eight years of age, who had been confined here for ten years. The government wished to release him if only he would sign a document promising not to take part in counter-revolutionary activities. But he absolutely refused, and prefers to remain where he is. During ten years he has never left his cell even for exercise, declaring " that he cannot support the smell of the Bolshevists." He does no work, is well fed and is now being allowed to write his memoirs. Probably he is wise to remain where he is, for how could he earn his living outside ?

The atmosphere of a Soviet prison is entirely different

from that in other countries. In all but No. 1 prisons the captives are never locked in their cells, but roam about at large. The warders and prisoners live on terms of equality. The atmosphere is one of good-will and *bonhomie*. But for the loss of liberty, the conditions of life compare most favourably with those of the mass of the population outside. In fact, I saw more smiling faces in prison in half an hour than I had seen during the whole of my stay in Moscow.

The prisoners are not compelled to work, although given every encouragement to do so. Each is taught a trade, unless he already has one, and the majority are employed in the textile industry. There are day and night shifts of eight hours each. Every two working days count for three, so that a prisoner can work off one third of his sentence. If not, he lolls in his cell and serves his full time. Two prisoners are confined in every cell, which are bright and kept scrupulously clean. They have straw mattresses and blankets and can buy sheets if they care to. Every cell is well provided with sponges, soap and tooth-brushes, which the convicts purchase from the prison store. Smoking is allowed everywhere at all hours of the night and day. The prisoners wear their own clothes, which they can replenish from the depôt. They are allowed to receive visits from their friends and relatives twice a month. The food is excellent, far better, in fact, than the average Russian can obtain outside, and at the canteen they can purchase almost any luxury not included in the prison fare. I bought bread there to take back to my hotel, because of its superior quality. My taxi-driver followed me in, and I found him making extensive purchases at the prison store. He turned to me and said, " It is better to buy in a nice warm prison

than to stand for hours freezing in a queue outside a State shop."

Formerly the prisoners received eighty roubles a month for their work, out of which the cost of feeding them was deducted and ten roubles per month set aside to be handed to them on release. The balance they could spend as they wished within the prison. But eighty roubles per month, combined with a nice warm cell and good food, compared too favourably with labour conditions outside, where the average wage for unskilled labour is only sixty roubles per month. The prisons were in danger of becoming overcrowded. Therefore the wages have now been reduced to forty roubles per month.

The truth is that a term in prison is no longer considered a social disgrace in Russia, even for the most heinous crimes. So many millions have passed in and out during the last eleven years that a sojourn in gaol has become to be considered the natural state of man.

The first cell I visited contained a placid-featured man of middle age, who was serving a stretch of five years for embezzlement. He was busily engaged in making toys for his children's Christmas. In the next cell, a most sinister individual rose as we entered, with the real brutal Bill Sykes look about him. "What are you here for?" I asked. "Murder!" came the sullen answer. The words sent a shiver through me; for the first time in my life I stood in the same cell with some one who had taken another person's life in cold blood. I hurried quickly out; the atmosphere seemed stuffy.

In the next cell a jovial-looking man, his face suffused with smiles, rose to greet us. "What are you here for?"

"Murder!" he answered with a broad grin. Somehow this murderer did not seem as guilty as the last; he appeared a good-natured, well-intentioned individual. On opening the next door, "Murder!" came the reply in answer to our customary interrogation. The fourth: "Assisting a murder, but I really didn't do the killing."

No one took the trouble to lock the doors of the cells after we had quitted them, so the murderers all came out and joined our queue as we marched round the prison, taking advantage of the opportunity for a little exercise and talks with their pals. At first the sensation of being followed by about a dozen cut-throats was not agreeable, but it soon passed, as they went out of their way to be polite and agreeable.

Suddenly a door was flung open and I found myself in the prison barber's shop, beautifully clean, and containing a much better assortment of soaps, scents, ointments, hair oils and powders than I had seen anywhere else in Moscow. But it was the barber who immediately fixed the attention. Never have I seen a more remarkable-looking figure. He was arrayed in spotless white overalls with deep blue facings. He had a strange pensive look and kept his eyes almost invariably fixed on the ground. In his right hand he held —at the angle of the handle and the blade—a razor which he moved slowly from side to side with a slow rhythmic movement. But it was his hair which fixed the eye. Over his forehead there hung coal black ringlets combed and oiled after the fashion of the early Victorian ladies. On the sides and back were a number of the most beautiful Marcel waves; he must have spent hours at this labour of love.

"Well," I said to the warder, "this man is surely not a criminal?" "Oh, yes he is," replied the chief gaoler. "He murdered his wife in a fit of jealousy by cutting off her head with a razor, and got ten years. When he came here we tried to train him to some trade but he turned out useless. Suddenly it occurred to us to make him the prison barber."

Thus, day after day, the wife-murderer stands pensively outside his shop, slowly waving his razor to and fro, and beckoning to his fellow prisoners to try a taste of his skill. They offered me a free shave but, fortunately, I had the excuse that I had already shaved that morning!

I found the prison store in charge of a magnificent-looking young Russian, over six feet high and dressed in blue breeches, high Russian boots and a Tolstoy blouse. I thought he was an official because the chief gaoler placed his arm affectionately round his neck and kissed him on both cheeks. His was a sad case. Formerly in charge of another prison, he was found guilty of taking bribes, and had recently received a sentence of ten years. As he had a sound knowledge of administration he had been placed in charge of the canteen, where the prisoners came to make all their purchases. Yet this man, who had occupied a high position in the Soviet hierarchy, seemed to feel his position very little.

I next visited the workshops, where the day shift were busy. Here I found the best dressed man in Russia. He had on an immaculately-fitting black suit and breeches with high Russian boots, beautifully polished, and protected from the mud by goloshes. Over his shoulders there hung, Hussar fashion, a magnificent Astrakhan cape, and on his head was a hat of the same material. "The real Beau

Brummel of Russia," I thought, as he gracefully posed with one arm on a machine, smoking a cigarette. He greeted my arrival with a disdainful smile, but when my interpreter put the usual question, he answered with the sweetest of smiles: "Seven years for highway robbery with violence. I have yet another year and a half to serve."

I visited the kitchens and baths, and ended up with the hospital. The doctors are fully qualified female practitioners with some male assistants. The head doctor seemed an extremely intelligent woman. A social worker from the United States said to her: "Please tell me, do you get a great many cases of venereal diseases coming here?" The lady doctor replied: "No, in fact extremely few. You see, the majority of our prisoners are better-class counter-revolutionists, who do not suffer much in this respect."

It will thus be noticed that social distinctions are still recognized in Russia—even in prison.

The Society for Cultural Relations arranged for me to visit the Chief Justice of Moscow, and one of the Soviet Courts. It was held in a converted school. The Chief Justice, a very young man, had formerly been a worker in a factory. As he could speak no language except Russian I was obliged to talk with him through an interpreter. I wished to find out all about the Soviet system for the administration of justice. The Chief Justice did not seem very anxious to talk. He explained to me that it was the fundamental principle of Soviet Law that all crimes and civil cases should be tried by the people themselves; and it was contrary to the Soviet principles to employ professional

judges, as that would do away with the supreme sovereignty of the people. The people's courts deal with civil and criminal cases. Political offenders are always sent before a special tribunal composed of faithful servants of the government who can be relied upon to bring in a verdict of guilty. In fact, in a political trial the judges would never dare bring in any other verdict once the Public Prosecutor, Krilenko, had called for the conviction of the accused. I was beginning to get on quite well with the Chief Justice, when another individual in black breeches, top boots, and a Tolstoy blouse, came in and sat by his side. From this moment the Judge fell into a pitiful state of nervousness, and looked like a guilty criminal in the dock. He wriggled in his chair, and it was obvious he was in the last stages of fear. My interpreter explained to me afterwards that the new-comer was sent to spy on the Judge and to report to the authorities all he said to me. In consequence, the situation became so embarrassing that I speedily brought the interview to a close, to the intense relief of the Chief Justice.

The old judges of the Tsarist régime have completely disappeared amongst the discards of the Revolution. They were either killed off, have died, or sunk amongst the dregs of the population. Many, however, of the old lawyers remain. Their lot is not a happy one, for they are all regarded with suspicion. Some still attempt to practise and earn a livelihood, but the vast majority have abandoned their profession for one which is less likely to bring them into intimate association with the Soviet legal authorities. Up to a short time ago, a barrister defending a client, or bringing an action on his behalf, could arrange his own

terms, but now all charges have been fixed by the State, and they are on an extremely low scale.

Barristers are placed in a painful position, torn between fear and their duty, when they are asked to defend political prisoners. They dare not really make an eloquent and logical defence of their clients. All they can do is to present his case in the most favourable light, and bring out in the mildest and most impartial manner any points in his favour. In these great political trials the wretched prisoners sit trembling before these improvised tribunals, lest they may be convicted; while their counsel sit trembling lest they may be acquitted, and thus bring down upon themselves the wrath of the Soviet authorities. But as the judges are equally frightened acquittals are few and far between.

In Russia to-day a barrister's life is not a happy or lucrative one. The total annual earnings of the whole of the Moscow bar would not nearly equal one successful year's income of Sir John Simon.

CHAPTER IX

INDUSTRY. FINANCE. FOOD SUPPLIES. FAMINE

MANY Bolshevists admit that Russia is passing through the worst financial crisis since the Revolution. But the majority are not pessimistic, and believe they will weather the storm, or muddle through somehow. The financial stringency is primarily due to the abolition of private capital, and the failure of State control, but there are many contributing causes.

To the men who have taken over the government, after years of persecution and exile, Russia represents a vast unexplored field of infinite wealth, only in need of development. In every government building you will find huge maps of Russia and Siberia, on which are marked in large red letters the particular minerals or riches which each district produces. There seems to be nothing, which the world requires, missing from the list. Commissions of technical experts and geologists are visiting every province of the Empire, and almost every day they make some new discovery which shows the potential wealth of the land. This vast survey must take years to accomplish. Due credit must be given to the government who initiated it, and to the men who are engaged on all this important work. They have found that there is no need for Russia to buy anything from abroad, and that if only her natural resources can be rapidly developed, in a few

years she will become almost independent of capitalist Europe.

Even now, the Bolshevists claim with pride that they have accomplished more in eleven years than the Tsars did in three hundred. This is probably true. However, by State control, and handing over the factories to the workers, they succeeded in wrecking many industries and ruining production, for the foremen and technical experts were killed off or dismissed. When these blunders became self-evident, the foremen and technical experts were recalled to work under conditions often less favourable than those of unskilled labour. But the evil had been done and the country has not yet recovered. There are some four million industrialists, but of these hardly fifty per cent. are on full time. Others find odd jobs or swell the ranks of the unemployed.

Industries in Russia may be divided into two categories; those which were confiscated, and those which have been created since the Revolution. For the former, the government required no initial capital except that which was necessary to clear up the horrible mess made when the workers took over control; the latter have been built out of forced loans (included in the annual budget) on which the government must pay interest. As private capital no longer exists, sums from the annual revenue are devoted each year to the development of new industries. It is the failure of Europe to provide them with the capital they require, to relieve the strain on the annual revenue, which is considered such a genuine grievance by those who for the past eleven years have been doing their utmost to destroy the capitalist. Owing to lack of working capital,

shortage in raw materials or unskilled management, labour disputes, and apathy produced by low wages, many factories only produce twenty-five per cent. of capacity; others are lying derelict, and have not yet produced anything. It is worth nothing at this stage that a transformation is now taking place in the government factories. Payment by time has turned out such a costly failure that piece-work is gradually being substituted; although this was previously denounced as a tyrannical system of the capitalist for sweating the workers!

A leader of great intelligence explained the difficulties and their causes in the following manner:

"In judging our present economic position you must remember that we succeeded to the very worst heritage it is possible to imagine. The administration of the country under the Tsars was indescribably bad. No effort had ever been made to exploit the natural resources of the country. The workers were ill-paid, ill-fed and ill-housed and were exploited in the most shameless manner by their masters. The country could not be governed from Leningrad. It was too close to our northern frontier, and the government was hopelessly out of touch with the country. In consequence, it became necessary to scrap all the old machinery of administration, especially that for the collection of taxes. Naturally, it will take time for us to settle down. You must remember that during the first four years we were continually engaged in wars both at home and abroad. Before the War, there was a very small manufacturing class composed of Russians. Their place was taken by Germans, English and French, who, naturally, having no stake in the country, thought

but little of our national interests or of the welfare of the workers, and were only concerned in what interest they could obtain on their investments. It is now the policy of the government to supplant the foreigner by the Russian manufacturer (i.e., the State), and ten years from now we expect Russia will be entirely independent."

These words explain much, but not all. The old régime is partly responsible, but the Bolshevists have themselves to blame for most of their difficulties. They ruthlessly destroyed private capital and private enterprise. Now when they badly need both, they can only raise capital out of revenue.

The total Budget of the U.S.S.R. for 1928-29, as approved by the Council of People's Commissars, amounts to 7,700 million roubles or roughly £800,000,000 at the Soviet rate of exchange, which is about equivalent to our own annual expenditure. This year's Budget shows an increase of 19.3 per cent. over the Budget of 1927-28.

This is a colossal sum of money for a country in the chaotic condition of Russia to raise, but according to the Soviet official figures, the Budget of 1927-28 showed a surplus of 310 million roubles. It must always be remembered that the Russian Treasury enjoys one great advantage in that it has no interest to pay on war debts or any pre-Revolution National Debt; it only pays interest on the internal loans it has raised since. The government has taken over all industries without compensation, i.e., has no interest or amortization to pay on the capital sunk in them. Thus, transport showed a profit last year of sixty million roubles—not a large sum considering there is no interest payable on capital.

This colossal revenue is obtained from interest on industries controlled by the State : railroads, forests, etc. ; from customs and excise duties ; from direct and indirect taxation. Almost everything is taxed somehow in Russia. The direct taxes are the Agricultural Tax and Income Tax, and on both these there was a considerable deficit last year. But the Budget could never be made to balance, but for the State Loans which are included in returns of revenue ; last year these amounted to 706 million roubles. They can hardly be called voluntary contributions as they are really obtained by deducting a portion of the wages of the organized workers and office employees, who would find it very awkward if they refused to contribute. Although no precise figures are quoted the government expects to raise even more by State loans during the ensuing year ; in fact it will be compelled to, if the Budget is to be made to balance. These loans disappear—as soon as raised—in the annual expenditure, but it is hoped they will reappear in later years on the revenue side. To quote the report on the Budget : "They represent large investments in various branches of national economy, which, in a few years' time, will revert to the Treasury in the form of profits from newly established enterprises."

This, of course, remains to be seen. The government, by borrowing money year by year, and including it as revenue, is building up a new formidable National Debt on which it must pay from eight to ten per cent. interest. Therefore, the industries in which the money is invested must produce this eight to ten per cent. profit for the service of the loan before the Treasury can benefit by a penny. The results of State control up to date in Russia

hardly make one believe that the Treasury will reap much benefit in the future.

Enormous sums are to be devoted this year to financing industry, amounting to 2,040 million roubles: 939 million roubles to industry proper—an increase of 48 per cent.; 184 millions to electrification, representing an increase of 35 per cent. There is to be an increase of 141 per cent. on expenditure on agriculture, bringing the total up to 317 millions. The expenditure on education is to be increased by 26 per cent.

Thus, in spite of difficulties, the Soviet Government is determined to do its utmost to further its vast programme of State industrialization. What this centralization of all industries in a gigantic bureaucracy will lead to in the end, only time can show. When one considers the vast size of Russia and her colossal undeveloped wealth, it would appear that the one thing needed is decentralization. The colossal task the State has undertaken is beyond the capacity of any single group of men, however able.

There has been a steady increase in the volume of paper money in circulation in Russia, which is causing the authorities much alarm, and which has had the natural effect of depreciating the value of the rouble abroad. The Chervonetz fluctuates in a remarkable manner, according to where you buy it. For instance, in Moscow the State Bank will only give you 9.45 to the £ sterling; in Berlin you can obtain from 16 to 18 to the £; in Riga 24 and in Constantinople as high as 26. The Chervonetz thus has no stabilized rate on the foreign exchanges, and each country puts its own value on Soviet currency. The government refuses to allow any roubles to be brought into Russia; the traveller

must declare the amount he has on him, and these are taken over at the Customs, and a receipt given in exchange, which will enable him to reclaim them on his way out. You are not allowed to take any more foreign currency out of Russia than you brought in, and then only if you have declared the sum on entry. The Soviet government does a very good business in buying up roubles abroad in foreign valutas, and shipping them back to Russia. The cost of living is terribly high for foreigners in Russia. Everything is expensive and the price is doubled if you have to exchange pounds at 9.45 instead of getting from 20 to 24 abroad. Of course, there is an illicit exchange business taking place in Moscow, and the clever ones who have been in the country for some time can usually get considerably above the official rate. But it is illegal and risky, and Russians caught at it disappear for long periods in prison.

The amount of paper money in circulation in Russia on October 1, 1928, was no less than 1,971·4 million roubles. On October 1, 1927, it was 1,628·3 million roubles, which means there were fresh issues of paper to the amount of 343·1 million roubles during the year 1927-28. But when I saw the Assistant Commissar of Finance at the end of November, he told me that the total paper money now in circulation amounted to 2,300 million roubles, which is an increase of 329 million roubles above the official figures published up to October 1, 1928.

Of this sum, bank-notes, which are supposed to have a gold backing, amounted to 1,122 million roubles, according to the Assistant Commissar of Finance. The balance is, therefore, made up of Treasury notes, which are the unknown quantity. By law, Treasury notes can only be

issued to the extent of 35 per cent. of all the moneys in circulation. The Commissar frankly admitted that this percentage had been greatly exceeded during the past year, owing to the crisis caused by the failure of the crops. According to his figures, Treasury notes without gold backing amount to rather more than 100 per cent. of all moneys in circulation.

According to my same informant, the gold reserve in the State Bank now amounts to 300 million roubles. It was higher, but the government was compelled to export gold in order to meet its obligations, owing to the failure of exports to balance imports, and through being compelled to purchase wheat abroad.

With so much inflation the purchasing power of the Chervonetz is falling steadily in Russia. The Commissar told me that in order to support the Chervonetz and to endeavour to stabilize it abroad, the government proposes to put aside seven per cent. per annum of the profits obtained from the State-run industries. I suppose this fund will be used toward withdrawing Treasury notes, or for the purchase of gold, or for buying up roubles on the foreign exchanges.

The total State Budget for the year 1928-29 is estimated at 7,700 million roubles. In addition, there are the local Budgets collected by the local Soviets for upkeep of roads, drains, etc. These amount to one milliard roubles per annum. The State makes a block grant of another milliard roubles to aid the local Budgets. The machinery for the collection of this immense revenue throughout the vast Russian territories is done by what the Commissar describes as "10,000 Cash Boxes." But now the old system

is to be scrapped and in future the State Bank will be responsible for collecting all taxes on behalf of the government.

According to the latest figures available, in May, 1929, the actual amount of money in circulation in Russia amounts to 2,104·5 millions of roubles of which 1,120·1 consists of bank-notes (Chervonetz) with a gold backing and 775·5 millions of roubles of Treasury notes. The balance is made up of the silver, copper and bronze coins in circulation.

When I left Russia there was much talk of famine, but there is no subject on which it was more difficult to arrive at the truth. I doubt whether the responsible Commissars are in possession of sufficiently precise information to make an accurate forecast of what is likely to happen during the next few months. This winter has been weathered, but it has been a hard one for millions.

You can divide Bolshevist leaders with whom you are brought into contact into two categories, viz., those who deliberately say that black is white and white is black, because they consider optimism before strangers is essential to propaganda ; and those who, while willing to argue with you on any question of principle, are always prepared to admit the difficulties which confront the government. Those in the first category are not worth talking with ; those in the second are always worth listening to, for they make no effort to conceal the truth, and have the common sense to see it is useless to try and deceive foreigners when the facts are self-evident.

There are many leaders who frankly declare that the country is passing through the worst economic crisis it has

had to face since the panic year of 1922. They also allow that a famine is within the bounds of possibility, but are hopeful that the country will weather the storm, always provided the machinery of distribution is equal to moving stocks from those districts where there is plenty to those where there is want. But what may happen this coming winter no one would care to prophesy. Russia, which should be entirely self-supporting and exporting grain, is annually faced with famine, owing to the agrarian policy of the Soviet.

The reason for the shortage of cereals last winter was as follows: There was a failure of crops in certain districts in the Ukraine which had a most disastrous effect, as it restricted the export of grain which was needed to balance the imports of manufactured goods. The Commissar of Finance was thus faced with a deficit in the National Budget. To balance this, enormous stocks of butter, cheese, milk and other dairy produce were exported last year, which helped to balance the Budget, but which left a corresponding gap in the supplies for home consumption. The masses of the population were compelled to do without them. Difficulties were increased by a failure in the potato crop in parts of Russia.

As a set-off to the losses in Russia proper, there was a bumper harvest throughout the grain-producing regions of the East. Thus, sufficient grain had to be moved west from Siberia and locally distributed in the regions where want prevailed, in the face of enormous difficulties. There is only a single line from Siberia, and there are few regional branch lines. The railway was therefore sorely taxed to handle the supplies needed for the big cities and regions

threatened with famine. In the Ukraine alone, there was a shortage of three hundred million poods of wheat, and the government could only manage to purchase forty million poods from abroad. I am told that the total capacity of the Siberian Railroad, owing to the shortage of rolling stock, is only eight hundred wagons per diem, which is insufficient. Every vehicle on two wheels was mobilized to assist in the local distribution. The government does all in its power to prevent a shortage in Moscow and Leningrad, as it is essential to keep the industrial population—the backbone of the party—content, but this is no easy task. The Wheat Commission has first to purchase the wheat from the peasants.

The chiefs say to you openly: "We are selfish and are obliged to be so. Whatever else happens, we shall keep enough grain in Moscow and Leningrad." But even before I left Moscow, bread queues had started and there had been several mild riots amongst the workers. This shortage was said to have arisen because the government was obliged to send a large quantity of wheat into the Kaluga district, which was faced with a crisis. The government spokesmen explained it otherwise. They declared it was due to a failure to supply the local bakeries in time. Whatever happened, the private bakers were suddenly refused any further supplies of flour, and the co-operative stores were ordered to supply the entire population. Those unfortunates who dealt with private bakers thus found the doors closed on them, and, unless they were in possession of co-operative tickets, they were unable to purchase at the big stores, or had to wait until others were served. This led to a mild panic amongst the population

and at dawn thousands were to be seen hastening to the bread shops to make their purchases before supplies gave out.

In considering the possibilities of a famine in Russia, such as swept away so many millions in 1922, one must not make the mistake of calculating the needs of the people from the standard of life in other European countries. The standard of living has fallen so low in Russia—it was never high—that the needs of the population are very simple : a half kilo of bread per day, some vegetables and, whenever available, a lump of meat or ham to put in the soup. The average Russian enjoys but one square meal a day, but he will eat two or three if supplies are available. Tea, which was formerly the staple drink of the country, is now beyond the budget of the majority of homes. The stocks are short and there is no money to spare for extensive imports. What is available is poor in quality and very expensive. The supplies of vodka are, however, apparently unlimited. The scarcity in milk, butter and cheese is so great that but few attempt any longer to obtain them. The queues for all articles grow bigger and bigger as the winter progresses. These queues are heartbreaking spectacles until you gradually become accustomed to them. In fact, the people are so habituated to queues that many spontaneously join them from force of habit, whether they require an article or not. The Russians possess a toughness and resistance to cold which is inconceivable. It is incredible how they can stand for hours at dawn, with the temperature twenty or thirty degrees below freezing-point, waiting for some shop or co-operative store to open its doors. Old women, young women, and girls in their 'teens fill most of the queues and

they must stand still in a fixed spot in this freezing atmosphere hour after hour without moving, otherwise they will lose their position in the line—the worst misfortune of all. It often happens that after waiting for hours the half-frozen rear ranks have to go away disappointed, the doors being suddenly closed owing to a failure in supplies. Such a life, such misery and such disappointments would produce a counter-revolution in any other country; but in Russia the mass of the people have passed through similar experiences so often during the past eleven years that they have forgotten any other existence. Their spirit has been crushed.

Your first impression, therefore, on entering Moscow is that a horrible famine is already sweeping through the land, but you must be careful to remember that everything is relative, and that these scenes of misery, however heart-breaking to the foreign observer, do not constitute a state of famine in Russia, either in the eyes of the people or of the government. A famine to the Russian means absolute starvation, when roots are devoured, thousands perish, and whole districts are abandoned. We can only hope things will not come to this pitch, but it would require a bold prophet to say they will not in some districts, sooner or later. When the only ambition of nine-tenths of the population is to obtain enough food to keep body and soul together, the hours wasted on obtaining, or failing to obtain what is sought for, become the ordinary daily occupation. The search for food is a profession in Russia, followed by millions as a natural way in which to pass their lives.

Last winter there were local famines involving many

deaths in some parts, but no general famine devastating whole districts, as has often happened in the past. A change in the government would be a national disaster during a famine. The reins are now in skilled hands, the most qualified to distribute the resources of the country. That the foolish economic policy of the distributors is largely responsible for the shortage is, in the face of a national disaster involving millions of innocents, beside the point.

Up to Christmas there was a surfeit of meat in Leningrad and Moscow and other big centres, because the peasants began killing off their stocks. This caused great alarm in government circles, and steps were taken to endeavour to check this indiscriminate slaughter, but without much effect. For some weeks the supply of meat was far above the requirements for the cities. The reasons for this sudden flooding of the market were variously ascribed: The peasants were short of fodder for their horses, pigs and cattle, and the price was so high they could not afford to purchase it; as they are taxed on every horse, cow, ox, or pig they possess, they are anxious to rid themselves of these encumbrances; as the majority had no surplus grain to sell, they could only obtain ready money for the purchase of manufactured goods by the sale of their live-stock. As one Russian put it to me: "They are either selling their live-stock to avoid paying taxes, or to obtain some money for manufactured goods; or else to obtain some money to pay the taxes they already owe."

Could these surplus supplies of meat be bought by the government, and kept in cold storage against the day of want, the evil would not be so great, but there are at present few facilities for cold storage—provision is being made in

this year's budget for building them—and the result is that the market is glutted, and for short periods meat is plentiful and extremely cheap. But the authorities are fully aware that the day is not far distant when they will be faced with a meat famine as well as a bread famine, and a total lack of what we should consider the bare necessities of life.

CHAPTER X

THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE PEASANTS

THE effects of State control on agriculture can be studied with advantage in Russia. There is no free market for the peasant producers; what they do not require for their own consumption is purchased by the central State co-operative organizations (State controlled), or by smaller local Soviet co-operative organizations and by private dealers. It is difficult to explain where the private dealers come in. It appears that in certain districts, when the government wants have been satisfied, grain can be purchased—above the official price—by private bakers. The latter are, in fact, Nepmen, who are liable to be suppressed at any time—as happened recently in Moscow—and who are deprived of the right to purchase flour whenever the government thinks fit. In dealing with figures in Russia one is entirely dependent on those furnished by the Soviet Government, and it must be assumed they are correct. But it is the omissions which throw more light on the economic situation than do the published statistics.

In the economic survey on grain collections published by the State Bank of the U.S.S.R., there are interesting admissions if one reads beneath the surface. No effort is made to conceal the difficulties, but figures are quoted to show that they have been overcome and that the situation is well in hand. The statement starts with the following words: "The opening of the grain-collecting campaign

was preceded by the importation of a certain quantity of wheat from abroad."

The employment of the word "campaign" is ominous and rather unfortunate, for the definition of campaign is "the operations and continuance of an army in the field," or "a course of political propaganda." But the Soviet Government is often outspoken, and it is doubtful if any other word could have been better chosen to describe the truth.

In order to obtain the necessary supplies of grain for the cities and districts threatened by famine, the government has to embark on a regular campaign against the peasants every year. It has to make its calculations as to the amount needed in advance and then induce the peasants—by peaceful persuasion or force—to produce the necessary supplies. This is one of the most pressing problems in Russia to-day. The peasant is not overworking himself to produce sufficient surplus wheat for the industrial workers and population of the cities because he has no free market, and is dissatisfied with the price fixed by the government—although this was slightly increased this year. It is impossible to force one hundred and forty millions to work against their will, and the government is so disgusted with the lack of the true spirit of Communism amongst the agriculturists that it wishes to make itself independent of them altogether. The seriousness of the situation is shown by the admission in the Economic Survey that Russia was obliged to import wheat from abroad last year.

In order to meet these difficulties, the government voted large sums, in 1928, to the development of large State grain farms (Sovkhoz) and to the organization of large col-

lective farms (Kolkhoz). The government expects, after a few years, to render the industrial population independent of the peasants. It also hopes, by becoming its own producer, to check the growth of the Kulak or rich peasant class. The Sovkhoz or State grain farms need some explanation. When the land was distributed there were very large areas left, over and above the requirements of the peasants. Sporadic attempts have been made to cultivate this, but for the most part it has been left untilled, either for want of money or lack of organization. It is commonplace truth that large farms can be cultivated far more economically than small holdings, and the government is now to undertake the experiment.

Where is labour to be found for the Sovkhoz ? Apparently it is to be drawn from the poor peasants who cannot eke out a living on their own holdings. They are to work for the government at a fixed wage, but whether they are to continue to cultivate their own allotments, I do not know. At present large numbers of peasants eke out an existence by working for the middle peasants or the Kulaks on their farms, either for money, or for the loan of a horse for their plough, or for payment in kind. If the government can draw away this labour from the middle peasants and Kulaks it will obtain work for its own State farms, and, at the same time, strike a heavy blow at the Kulaks as a class. No one would care to prophesy how the experiment will succeed, but the outlook for the peasant is not a bright one. The Kulaks and middle peasants can still sell their surplus stock at a poor price to the Grain Commission, and obtain some cash for the purchase of manufactured goods, but if the government becomes its own producer on a grand scale,

even this small market will be denied them. Then the Kulaks and middle peasants will have to work part-time for the government to enable them to buy the necessities of life, while continuing to cultivate their own land for the needs of themselves and their families.

Thus the government, by its action, is striking a death-blow at the very foundation of the Revolution, viz., the free gift of the land to the peasants—for the land is merely an encumbrance, if the peasant is cut off from a free market for his produce. Probably, in the end, State control of agriculture will turn out a grotesque failure. The cost of production will be, as usual, so high that the State will only be able to sell at prohibitive prices—or at a dead loss—to the big cities. The peasants will then gradually commence to undersell the government, and after a long period of miserable chaos, the country will once more revert to the old system. At the present time, the amount of grain collected by the government from State farms only amounts to 1·8 per cent. of the whole, according to the figures which were given me.

Ever since the Revolution the peasants have been drifting back to their pre-war state. Now if the government has its way a large number will no longer work for the landowners, but for the State, but, as the State-controlled farms are never likely to pay, the peasants will find themselves, after a brief period of transition, working once again for the landowners, drawn from their own class who, having been successful on their own holdings, will gradually absorb the labour of those who have not.

This experiment also shows the trend of Communism to segregate.

The party and its supporters are becoming more and more isolated from the Russian people. They are building a self-contained fortress in the midst of a disgruntled people. If the government can produce enough grain for the wants of industrial workers, on whom it relies as the basis of its power, it will be content to leave ninety per cent. of the population to stew in their own juice. But these experiments in the end defeat their own objects. If the State produces grain and is obliged to sell it to the workers at a heavy loss, and, at the same time, impoverishes the mass of the peasants, who is going to pay the taxes ? You cannot take from a man what he has not got.

Since I was in Russia the food question has become so serious that the Soviet Government has abandoned half-measures, has thrown off all disguise as to its real intentions, and has launched the most ambitious scheme ever planned for making the industrial workers independent of the caprices of the peasants. This scheme, which is to be spread over a period of five years, deserves careful study, because the settlement of the agrarian question is by far the most pressing problem in Russia to-day. The peasants have never accepted Communism, and have gradually drifted further away from the Bolshevist party, its doctrines and principles. The Kulaks and middle-peasants are, in the eyes of the government, a standing menace to the further development of Communism in Russia, and now a determined effort is to be made to wipe out the economic class distinctions which have sprung up since the Revolution, to destroy ruthlessly those classes who through their thrift, skill, and industry have raised themselves above their fellows,

and to enrol or enslave a sufficient number of those who are unable to earn a living on their holdings, as State labourers, and force them to toil for the exclusive benefit of the Communist Party and the Industrialists.

The only books Lenin really enjoyed, according to his biographer, were statistics. He spent the greater part of his life at this self-imposed task, and on his profound studies of the economics of all European nations—finance, agriculture and industry—he planned the economic revolution, which completely destroyed all Russia's industries, which caused the death of millions from starvation, and which is still strangling Russia's trade, and ruining the agriculture which should be her main source of wealth.

This love of statistics is the priceless heritage handed down by Lenin to his successors, and the monstrous Red Bureaucracy which governs from Moscow one-fifth of the habitable globe is literally snowed under by figures. It is a point of honour for every official to produce a certain number of fresh statistics each month, which are poured into the central receiving station which is the State Bank of the U.S.S.R. There they are collated, examined, catalogued, filed, cooked and re-cooked, until a summary has been prepared sufficiently attractive to be launched on the capitalist world. The State Bank of the U.S.S.R. issues every month a kind of health bulletin of the Soviet Republics, showing the state of all industries, banks, and national finances. The upward and downward trends of prosperity in trade, agriculture, banking and money in circulation are clearly shown in this statistical thermometer, and these masses of figures are accompanied by extremely illuminating explanations, which are designed to throw a

favourable light on every undertaking ; and when, as often happens, the figures contradict the progress which the authors would like to see, the skill of the writers is employed to prove that such set-backs are merely temporary, and only to be expected, considering the great difficulties in which the Soviet Republics are placed by the obstinate refusal of capitalist countries to make them loans on favourable terms.

Of course these documents—we are now at No. 20, Vol. IV—are only designed for foreign consumption. The Soviet Government would consider it derogatory to its dignity to make explanations to its own subjects ; neither would the mass of the Russians, illiterate and ill-versed in finance and economics, be able to understand a word. But if a simple translation of Document No. 20 of Vol. IV could be made, and circulated amongst the peasants, they would awake on the following morning to discover the distressing truth that they have lost the Revolution, that the land is to be taken from them and returned to the State, and that large numbers of them are condemned for all eternity, or as long as the Soviet Government lasts, to become mere hewers of wood and drawers of water for the Communist Party and the industrial section of the population.

One cannot help admiring the calm effrontery with which the Soviet proclaims to the whole world its plans for taking back the land from the peasants, thus blowing up the rock on which the Revolution was supposed to be founded. But the hatred of the Soviet for the peasants has reached such a point that the Politbureau has now thrown off all disguise, and is determined to engage in a fight to a finish with the Kulaks and middle-peasants, whose sturdy independence

and economic class distinctions can no longer be tolerated. By its "Five Year Plan for the Development of Agriculture in the U.S.S.R." the Soviet hopes to break the spirit of the Kulaks and middle-peasants by bringing them to ruin.

According to the official report: "The area under cultivation in 1928 was 115 million hectares, almost attaining the level of 1913. The supply of agricultural implements and farm equipment to the peasantry has exceeded the pre-war level. The area of the land under industrial crops has increased by 58·5 per cent. There are now 45,000 tractors in use in the U.S.S.R. and 35 per cent. of the peasants' allotments have been re-surveyed, that is to say, the land has been redistributed so as to comprise single compact allotments in place of the small and scattered strips of land that the vast majority of the peasants' allotments consist of to-day."

It would be interesting to know what percentage of this redistribution of land has been carried out at the expense of the Kulaks, who, by their skill and industry, have enlarged their holdings at the expense of the neighbours who have proved themselves unfitted to work them.

To quote once again from the official report, "While the above is a fair index of the progress of agriculture in the U.S.S.R., it is nevertheless generally known that our grain exports have declined, and that a certain stringency has been experienced in the food supply during the last year or so."

"How is this to be explained?" asks the writer, and then proceeds to quote figures showing the difference in the pre-war production of the different categories of

peasants compared with the production in 1926-27. The pre-war production amounted to 819·1 million metric centners; in 1926-27 it was 777·9 million metric centners, a drop of 53 million metric centners. But it is not the fall in the gross aggregate of production which is so fatal to Russia, as the tremendous falling off in the amount of grain placed on the open market; i.e., the amount available for purchase by the Government grain commissions for the feeding of the industrial workers in the centres of industry, and for export abroad. In the year preceding the war 211·9 m.m.c's were placed on the market, whereas in 1926-27, the last year for which statistics are available, only 103·2 m.m.c's could be collected by the government commissions, or a reduction of about 50 per cent. It is owing to this great falling off of marketable grain that Russia is constantly faced with famine and forced to purchase wheat from abroad. The Soviet is now driven to desperate remedies to increase the supply in the future.

The official report makes no secret of the reasons. "This is due to the breaking up of the large private estates, and the distribution of the land amongst the peasants—only part of these estates were retained intact as State farms—and to the decreased share of the Kulak farms."

(In pre-war times the Kulaks or wealthy peasants employing labour produced 311·2 m.m.c's. In 1926-27 the Kulaks only produced 101·2 m.m.c's.)

Thus here is an official confession that the distribution of the land at the Revolution has turned out a costly failure, and that the elimination, or endeavour to eliminate the Kulaks, has brought about this disastrous shortage of marketable grain. Of course the whole truth is not stated,

many factors have contributed to the falling off in production, viz., the closing of the open market; the low prices paid by the government grain commissions; the scarcity of manufactured goods, which discourages the peasants from working as they have little to buy even if they do show a profit.

The report continues, "The agrarian revolution fundamentally changed the social and economic structure of the Russian countryside. The land that formerly belonged to the landlords and the semi-capitalist farmers passed into the hands of the poor and middle-peasant population, considerably improving their welfare (on paper only). But, on the other hand, this resulted in an enormous increase in the number of small allotment farms: from 16 millions to 25 millions.* With almost primitive methods of production and small yield, the greater part of which is for home consumption—approximately only 11 per cent. of the crop being placed on the market, the socialized section of agriculture, that is to say, the State and the co-operative farms—although their number is growing—nevertheless as yet only produces a small proportion of the total grain output and does not compensate for the disappearance of the principal grain suppliers in pre-war times." (In other words agriculture has been reduced by the elimination of the Kulaks .)

"This is the chief reason for the decline in the quantity of marketable grain. Here one must add that the peasants are consuming a larger share of their produce than formerly."

* It is interesting to note that there were no less than 16 million smallholders in Russia in the Tsarist days before the Bolshevists ever appeared on the scene.

(Because they cannot obtain an attractive price, or manufactured goods.)

"Another important factor is the large increase in the area under industrial crops, which has resulted in a corresponding reduction of grain-growing country. This fact and growing demand on grain owing to the rapid industrialization of the country has caused a temporary check in the development of grain production.

"These are the circumstances that have determined the principal tasks outlined in the Five Year Plan in regard to agriculture: "(1). To establish large scale State (Sovkhoz) and co-operative (Kolkhoz) agricultural enterprises, capable of ensuring a sufficient supply of grain for the urban and industrial districts, assisting at the same time in the social and technical reconstruction of individual peasant farming. (2). To check the further disintegration of individual farming, raising it to a higher technical level by co-operation and other measures." (Of course this individual protection is meant for the poor peasants who are now working for the Kulaks. The latter are not included.) "(3). To devote special attention to the grain question, and to lay the foundation for the development of other branches of agriculture in the ensuing five years. (4). *To reduce the share of small capitalist farming—the Kulaks—in agriculture.*" The italics are mine. In this single sentence is contained the real objective of the Soviet campaign.

What the Soviet cannot stand—because it is the triumph of individualism—is contained in the following paragraph: "At the present time, 10 per cent. of the farming population, representing the more wealthy section, control 40 per cent. of the marketable grain. This explains the

difficulties that have been experienced recently in regard to the purchase of grain. Therefore one of the principal points in the Five Year Plan is to enlarge the socialized section of agriculture to such a scale that, by the end of the five year period, it will be able to produce a quantity of grain equal to that now produced by the Kulak class."

In other words, the able peasants, who have proved their ability to work their farms at a profit by their own unaided efforts without State aid, are to be eliminated, and the poor peasants, working as hired serfs of the State, are to be made to take their place. What a pleasing outlook for the coming generation!

This glorious triumph of State control over individualism, anticipated in the future but not yet proved to be feasible, is to be brought about by subsidized State farms and collective farms, and by refusing corresponding assistance to the Kulaks. The Government makes no concealment of its plans. *Inter alia*, the report states, "sowing of improved seeds, *which the government supplies to the poor and middle-peasants*; the sifting and selection of seeds; furrow sowing, extermination of pests (including the Kulaks), utilizations of fertilizers; land improvement measures, etc."

The government calculates on raising the crop by 30 to 35 per cent. within the course of the next five years.

"Collective Farms: It is estimated by the end of the five year period the collective farms will cover an area of 20 million hectares, and that the number of farmers engaged, including their families, will reach 20 millions. This figure will absorb the increase in the population of this period. The number of individual farms on the other hand will be diminished. On these collective farms 120,000 tractors

will be employed, and on 75 per cent. of the area rural machinery will be introduced. In 1932 the collective farms will produce 40 million m.m.c's. of grain, that is to say, about 25 per cent. of the total marketable grain in the country. The policy of authorities is to develop large farms each of which will, with the aid of tractor and machine basis, cultivate on collective lines tens of thousands of hectares, embracing scores of villages. . . . Collective methods will be developed to a greater extent than they are now. For example, while at the present time about one-half of the fixed capital in the collective farms is in individual possession—land, buildings, etc.,—in 1923, 75 per cent. will be collectively owned."

It will thus be seen that the personal property of the peasants is to be gradually confiscated, and to be handed over to the collective farms, i.e., the State.

Soviet Farms. "The recently established Grain Trust has already set to work organizing large Soviet farms chiefly in East Siberia, Kazakstan, the Volga district, etc. Measures are taken to stimulate the development of collective and individual peasant farming in these sparsely inhabited districts; the peasants will provide the Soviet farms with labour power, while the latter will provide the former with machinery.

"This will be a new form of land settlement. In 1932-33 the Soviet farms run by the Grain Trust are estimated to produce 16 million centners of grain, while all the Soviet farms together will produce 28 million centners, or 18 per cent. of the total marketable grain in the country . . . By the end of the five year period, the whole output of industrial crops, 8 per cent. of the grain yield, and 50 per cent. of animal products reaching the market will

be purchased on the contract system. Thus a predominant proportion of the marketable rural output will be drawn into the socialized section of agriculture through the medium of agricultural co-operative societies. *Private enterprise will be almost completely eliminated from these operations.* . . . Instead of making contracts with individual peasants collective contracts will be made with the whole community of peasants of a number of villages together, and instead of year to year contracts, they will cover long periods. This will help to eliminate the anarchy of individual farming and to draw the peasant into the orbit of planned economy.

" Thus, in addition to a quantitative increase there will also be a change in agriculture's structure; for industrial crops will increase far more readily than other crops. Of the grain crops wheat and maize will show the greatest increase. The total output of grain will increase from 75 million to 106 million tons, the marketable output increasing from 8·2 tons to 20 million tons. This will enable large stocks of grain to be accumulated, and by the end of the five year period 8 million tons will be available."

Now we come to the final calculations which are interesting but hardly accurate.

" Regarding the changes which will take place in the social structure of agriculture, it must be pointed out that with an increase of the peasant population from 123,000,000 to 137,000,000 the population of the non-social section of agriculture will diminish from 122,000,000 to 117,000,000, i.e., the collective section (Soviet and collective farms) will absorb the whole of the increase in the population, and an additional 5,000,000 from the former section."

What this means is not easy to say. The official report has already stated that by the end of five years 20,000,000 farmers and their families will be employed on the collective farms alone, which makes up the difference between the total number of peasants, viz., 137,000,000 and the non-socialized section 117,000,000. This makes no allowance, however, for the labour required on the Soviet State farms, which are destined to play such an important rôle in the future. How the collective farms are going to absorb the whole increase in the population is another problem not easy to solve. Babies will probably be born all over Russia and Siberia. Does the State mean to appropriate them and shove them into the collective farms, until they are old enough to work! At this point the statisticians seem to have become a little muddled with the extent of their own statistics.

"By the end of the five year period collective farming will provide 17 per cent. of the gross output and 25 per cent. of the marketable output of agriculture; and in view of the fact that grain is the principal crop cultivated by the collective section, the latter will provide 40 per cent. of the grain brought to the market. The gross output per member of collective farms will be 230 roubles, and the marketable output 83 roubles per member, as compared with 150 roubles and 39 roubles per head on individual farms. Thus, notwithstanding the fact that the collective farms are made up of poor and middle peasants, the latter will be better off at the end of five years than the individual peasant."

Naturally this gigantic scheme for making the Soviet Government and the Industrial workers, who are the mainstay of the Bolshevist Party, independent of the peasant, cannot be carried through without the expenditure of vast

sums of money. I have refrained from burdening the reader with a vast number of statistics showing how it is to be spent, and also with the figures showing the increase expected in every branch of agriculture, live-stock, machinery, fertilizers, etc. They are all based on hypothetical calculations which probably have very little relation to the truth, because they omit all questions of wars, civil disturbances, changes in the government, bad harvests, etc. I will let the Official Report speak for itself.

"In conclusion we will deal with the financial aspect of the five year plan. The total new capital to be invested in agriculture, including investments by the individual peasants will, in the course of the five years, amount to 23,000 million roubles, as compared with 15,000 million roubles invested in the past five years. Of this sum, 16,000 million roubles or 75 per cent. will be direct investments and the rest will be employed for housing, etc.; 9,000 million roubles or 56 per cent. of the total investments will be employed on measures of reconstruction provided for in the plan, that is to say, will come under the direct control of the State. The 9,000 million roubles are to be obtained from the following sources:—

	Mill. rbls.	*Per cent.*
Private resources of the population ..	2,240	24·9
Collective and Soviet farms	710	7·9
Government establishments	560	6·2
Local Budget	400	4·4
State Budget and credit	5,090	56·6
	9,000	100

"Of the total investments, 25 per cent. will go to individual farming, 20·4 per cent. to collective farms and 11·4 per cent. to Soviet farms. The rest is to be employed for various State and co-operative enterprises, such as land improvement measures, industrialization, etc. The State will provide finances mainly for the collective section of agriculture and the agricultural co-operative societies; the individual peasants nevertheless will obtain direct aid from the State to the amount of 1,060 million roubles, or 20·8 per cent. of the total sum to be invested."

Thus, 23,000 million roubles, or roughly three times the amount of the whole Russian Budget, is to be sunk in these State control experiments in the course of the next five years. The official document does not say how this money is to be raised, but presumably by taxation. The 9,000 millions to be employed on measures of reconstruction are to be raised direct from the agricultural community, as shown in the foregoing table. The item of 2,240,000 from the private resources of the population is significant. The peasants have no funds available for investment. It means that this sum is to be squeezed out of the wretched Kulaks by taxation for the benefit of the State schemes. But the sum collected is likely to fall far short of the estimate.

The sentence "of the total investments, 25 per cent. will go to individual farming, 20 per cent. to the collective farms, and 11·4 per cent. to Soviet farms" is deceiving. At first sight it would appear that individual peasant farmers are to receive more under the Five Years Scheme than either the Collective or State farms. But it must be remembered that the Kulaks, who represent 10 per cent. of the farming population, and who produce 40 per cent. of the

marketable grain at the present time, are to receive nothing at all; and the total individual farmers and their families number, including the Kulaks, 117,000,000. Thus 84 per cent. of the peasants are to receive less than 40 per cent. of State aid, while 16 per cent. working for the government are to receive 60 per cent.

I have quoted only necessary figures; what is really important is to arrive at the underlying motives for carrying through this gigantic scheme. The answer is quite simple. (1) It is a death-blow aimed at the Kulaks, who, during the past eleven years, have gradually formed themselves into a peasant aristocracy, and who employ the labour of others on their holdings, an unpardonable crime in the eyes of the Bolshevists. The Kulaks detest the Communists, and refuse to produce enough grain for the use of the industrialists; or if they do produce a surplus they prefer to use it themselves, or conceal it, rather than sell it to the Grain Commission at a rate so low that they are unable to purchase manufactured goods, even if these were available. The Kulaks are thus to be left to stew in their own juice, as soon as the government can produce enough grain from its collective and State farms for the towns, and for export. If things work out as expected by the Soviet, the Kulaks will be completely broken as a class within five years, for they will be unable to find any market for their produce, and will be forced to seek work in the State farms.

The lot of the middle-peasants, who form the bulk of the population, will be the same unless they hand over their holdings to the collective farms, and sell themselves into bondage for all time. The land will no longer be their own, but will belong to the whole community. They will

share the profits on a communal basis, and thus there will be no incentive left for hard work and individual enterprise. The thrifty worker, and the drunken idler, will share and share alike. The collective farms will produce a minimum of grain, at a maximum of cost, as the Government will soon find. Why should a peasant work harder than his neighbours, if he is not able to obtain any benefit for himself, but merely contributes to the general support of the whole community? He is no longer a proprietor, but a hired labourer, working on unequal terms.

On the Soviet State farms the poor peasants are to become mere labourers "the peasants will provide the Soviet farms with labour, while the latter will provide the former with machinery." This is announced as some epoch-making experiment, but since when, and in what country has a hired labourer or serf, as he is in Russia, been expected to bring his own machinery with him? Since Pharaoh expected the Israelites to provide straw for his bricks, the question has never arisen!

Those employed on the State farms will have no land of their own. The objective of the government is to draw this free labour—composed of those who are incapable of supporting themselves on their own land—away from the Kulaks. As the State farms grow in number and in size a larger number of the unfortunate Russian peasants will find they have permanently lost the fruits of the Revolution.

Yet at the end of five years the Soviet only expects to have 20,000,000 peasants and their families working on collective farms, but the number of labourers on the State farms is not stated. 20,000,000 is less than 16 per cent. o the total number of peasants in Russia, so 84 per cent.

will still be individual farmers, but cut off from the market which has been theirs in the past. Naturally, if the Soviet is successful, it will not stop at 20,000,000, but will gradually absorb more and more of the peasants as hewers of wood and drawers of water.

The government is in reality embarking on a vast campaign against the peasants, in the interests of the Communist Party and the industrial community. The Soviet cannot exist without the peasants, and therefore, for the moment 20,000,000 are being enlisted in the government service to provide food for the towns, and grain for export. Forty per cent. of the total marketable grain is to be produced by 16 per cent. of the agrarian population in five years' time. The balance needed for the towns and exports will have to be purchased from individual farmers. Thus, while 16 per cent. of the peasants are producing 40 per cent. of the total supply needed, 84 per cent. are to produce 60 per cent. The percentage from the individual farmer will gradually become smaller, and a vast number will be obliged to throw up their holdings and join the collective farms, in order to earn ready money for the purchase of manufactured goods. In the end, followed to its logical existence, the individual farmers will be squeezed out of the market altogether and will sink to a state of primitive savagery, existing on the products of their land without manufactured goods. But "the best laid schemes of mice and men," etc. The production of the collective and Soviet farms is sure to be infinitely more costly, for reasons I have already stated, than on individual farms, in spite of government aid. Of the 23,000 millions to be sunk in agriculture it is only stated how 9,000 millions are to be raised.

The balance of 14,000 millions will have to be raised by loans and not less than 8 per cent. will have to be paid on the money, which is an enormous overhead charge on agriculture. The government grain commissions will find they can only purchase from the collective farms at exorbitant rates, if they are to leave any profits to the workers. The collective farms will be undersold in the market by the individual farmers; or else, if the grain commission purchase at exorbitant rates, they will increase the cost of living to the industrial workers, who will demand an increase in wages, which the government cannot afford to give.

Whatever happens, the Soviet is sure to end up in a vicious circle. The end is not yet in sight. The Kulaks and the middle-peasants have not yet lost their fight, and they may win in the end, in spite of having the whole weight of the combined forces of the government against them.

If the government is successful in carrying through the programme, a very curious situation will arise in Russia. The Communist Party, the armed forces, the G.P.U. and some five million industrial workers, will become economically independent of the industrial peasant farmers, and will be fed by thirty million hired agricultural labourers and their families. In all, some 30 to 35 millions of people will form an ensured State, within the State, and the balance of some 120,000,000 will be left to their own resources. It is a curious experiment, but it is very unlikely it can ever succeed.

By entirely closing the open market, and refusing all State aid to the thrifty and skilful farmer, the Soviet hopes to enslave a sufficient number of the peasants to work

exclusively for the Communist Party and the industrial workers, on whom it relies for the mainstay of its power.

The outlook for the wretched Russian peasant is dark in the extreme. The Kulaks are to be utterly destroyed, the independent middle-peasants are to have their market closed, and the poor peasants are to be taken from the land to work on the government farms for a fixed wage.

No wonder it is a common saying in Russia " the proletariat has already lost the fruits of the Revolution."

CHAPTER XI

THE REVOLT AGAINST STALIN

THOSE who have not been in Russia recently can have little idea of the struggle which is raging beneath the surface, within the ranks of the Communist Party. The attention of the world was recently drawn to these dissensions by Leon Trotsky's articles in the *New York Times*, in which he described the intrigues which eventually ended in his being dismissed from office, and sent into exile. I am often asked this question, "Why is it that Stalin, his bitterest enemy, has allowed him to leave Russia, when he must have known that the moment he reached neutral soil Trotsky would expose the conduct of his former colleagues?"

The psychology of the Bolshevists is always difficult to understand. The logic in their actions is never easy to follow and Trotsky's case is no exception to the rule. The probable reasons for Stalin's action are as follows: (1). He dared not do away with Trotsky in the customary manner, because the latter has too many friends throughout the Bolshevist hierarchy and followers amongst the rank and file of the immense bureaucracy which governs Russia. (2). Trotsky is still a popular figure with the army which he organized and led to victory. (3). Stalin regards Trotsky as a lesser danger outside the frontiers of Russia than within.

Stalin feared that some untoward "accident" might

happen to the old revolutionary for which he, Stalin, would be held responsible. Once Trotsky was on foreign soil, Stalin could wash his hands of all further responsibility. A " Return from Elba " is not regarded as a serious menace, as the frontiers are too well guarded by the troops of the G.P.U., and no one knows better than the exile what his fate would be.

Trotsky has painted a picture of Stalin which conforms in most respects with the views Lenin held of his character. He regards him as an excellent organizer and secretary, but as possessing no pretensions to statesmanship.

Stalin is not a popular leader in any sense of the term, as was Trotsky. He rarely appears in public, and then only in the meetings of the All Union Congress of Soviets, which are held within the precincts of the Kremlin in the St. George's Hall of the Big Palace. He lives, eats and sleeps within the Kremlin, and during the two months I remained in Moscow he never once ventured outside this Communist stronghold. No one knows where his private apartment is situated, and it is said he rarely sleeps in the same room two nights running, but I cannot vouch for the truth of this. Stalin is a tremendous worker and devotes his entire time to the affairs of the Party. His salary is 250 roubles per month and he is quite incorruptible, like the majority of Bolshevist leaders. He was born, bred, and has lived a revolutionist all his life, and understands no other existence. In appearance, he is of middle height with a square forehead, fine eyes, and slightly grey hair. The shape of his head strongly resembles Hindenburg's, as the latter must have appeared as a young man. His strength lies in his immense powers of work, his consistency of purpose, and the unique

knowledge he possesses of the party machine. He is entirely ignorant of any other language but Russian, and is therefore cut off from all direct intercourse with foreigners, who must converse with him through an interpreter—and in Russia an interpreter will seldom dare translate your true words, fear is too paramount. Stalin possesses no knowledge of the outside world, and, like all other Bolshevist leaders, is ludicrously ignorant of conditions of life in Europe and in the United States. The Bolshevist leaders, in fact, suffer from the most extraordinary illusions as to the course events are likely to take in other countries. They believe, for example, that it is part of Mr. Hoover's policy to grant immediate recognition to the Soviet Government because, as they put it, "Mr. Hoover is a business man before all else, and he realizes it is necessary to the future prosperity of the United States to re-establish trade with Russia." To one like myself, who went direct from the misery, poverty and bankruptcy of Russia to New York, which has been transformed in the past decade, it is difficult to imagine that the prosperity of the United States is, or ever will be, dependent on her trade with Communist Russia. A few photographs of this city might open the eyes of Stalin and his colleagues to the truth.

Trotsky has revealed in his letters that he himself is hopelessly out of touch with the realities of the political and economic position in Russia at the present day. This is not to be surprised at, considering he has been in exile for the past eighteen months, and events have moved rapidly since then. The quarrel between Trotsky and Stalin, which is now more than six years old, makes excellent reading, but it has no bearing on the present situation. There is

just as keen a feeling of revolt against Trotsky as there is against Stalin, amongst the younger members of the Communist party, who are "fed up," to use a colloquialism, with the old doctrinaire revolutionary chiefs who brought about the Revolution but are incapable of constructing a new Russia.

The most curious passage in Trotsky's revelations is the following, because it throws a flood of light on how far he is thinking behind the times: He writes "Stalin's victory is a victory of the more moderate, conservative, bureaucratic and nationalistic tendencies and of the partisans of private property over the principles of world revolution and the traditions of Marxism. Consequently I have no reason to protest when the bourgeois press so eulogistically praises Stalin's realism."

Now, while Trotsky is blaming Stalin for his move towards the right in favour of the bourgeois and of the N.E.P. (New Economic Policy), the present revolt within the party, amongst the younger Communists, is directed against Stalin and his colleagues because they are regarded as out-of-date doctrinaire reactionaries, who have failed to carry into effect Lenin's death-bed repentance, viz., to restore private trade and to allow the Nepmen a chance of making money under reasonable conditions, in order that they might become the chief tax-payers of the country. The truth is, the Revolution has moved on a stage, without Trotsky being aware of the fact.

It is difficult to follow the quarrel within the ranks of the party which led to the expulsion of Trotsky, Kamenev and Zinoviev, but it is necessary to explain it briefly, if the present situation in Russia is to be understood. The

true centres of the Bolshevist power are naturally to be found in the great cities. The programme of social reforms which the Bolshevists have endeavoured to carry through, has never been exploited beyond the boundaries of certain cities, and the Party, therefore, relies on the industrial workers as the basis of their power. Half their financial difficulties have been caused by a premature and too ambitious industrial programme. They have built factories at a rate which has outstepped the means of production. Some are not producing at all, or at a loss, others at only twenty-five per cent. of the capacity which had been calculated upon. The conflicting interests of the peasants and the industrial workers led to a split in the Bolshevist ranks. Trotsky came forward as the champion of the industrialists. His policy was to squeeze the rich peasants—the Kulaks—and to utilize the money thus obtained for the further development of industries. His opponents, headed by Stalin, declared the peasants to be the backbone of the nation and the mainstay of the Communist Party—they quoted Lenin's words in their support—and that Trotsky's extreme policy was likely to defeat its own object by killing the goose which laid the golden egg. After a long, bitter controversy, Stalin won the fight and Trotsky was despatched to Siberia.

Now what has happened ? Stalin has stolen Trotsky's thunder and is engaged in carrying out the very policy which the latter was advocating two years ago ! This is why the old champion is so bitter against the new, whom he regards as a usurper who has played him a dirty political trick. All Stalin's recent utterances have been directed against the Kulaks, and the middle-peasants, who are

becoming a pariah class, preying on the rest of the community, in his opinion. At the present time there is a ruthless campaign against the remnants of the bourgeois and the Nepmen in the towns, and terrible threats against the Kulaks, but the latter have not yet been carried out. It is easy to get at the bourgeois and Nepmen in the centres of population, but it is extremely difficult to carry on an effective campaign against the Kulaks scattered in villages over an immense expanse of territory.

Thus there is no real difference between the policies of Trotsky and Stalin, and the quarrel was really a personal one for supremacy within the party. Were Stalin to leave to-morrow, and were Trotsky to return, it would merely mean a change of name on the signboard of the Revolution.

Trotsky has not a single constructive proposal to make, and the revolt against Stalin is due to a similar reason, namely, his inability to put forward a policy which will lift Russia out of the slough of despondency and economic ruin into which she is sinking deeper and deeper day by day.

The Communist bureaucracy is to-day seething with discontent, especially amongst the younger Jewish element. Stalin is perfectly aware of this fact, and would like to make a clean sweep of his opponents, but even he is not powerful enough to do so, and the movement is so widespread that any attempt at a general clean-up would dislocate the whole party machine, and expose its weakness to the world. Russia, which was formerly governed by the Tsar and his hierarchy, is now governed by a hierarchy of Georgians, Letts, and Jews. Ninety-eight per cent. of the Russian

people remain slaves just as they have ever been, and they have no power of revolting against their masters. But of the one per cent. who form the governing class, viz., the Communist Party, at least ninety per cent. feel they are slaves, and would give almost anything to throw off their shackles. There are thousands who joined the Revolution and became members of the Communist Party, because they genuinely felt a new and enlightened Russia would arise from the ashes of the Revolution. To-day they are completely disillusioned. They find iron bonds riveted more closely than they ever were under the Tsars. Thousands of those who saw no chance of self-expression, and for the full play of their abilities and ambitions under the old régime eagerly welcomed the Revolution as the only means of emancipation. To-day they find they are no better off, and must remain throughout their lives petty officials of the Party Machine, obeying the dictates of the Big Nine, viz., the Politbureau, and working at wretched salaries never amounting to more than two hundred and fifty roubles a month. The future holds out nothing except tyranny, fear, and poverty, and a young Communist is supposed to find joy in marrying, and bringing up a family under such conditions! The system is peculiarly hateful to the younger Jews, who have never known the old régime, or years of exile. It is the natural trait in the character of the Jew to play for his own hand and to build up a private fortune. But his favourite pursuits are now denied him, and he finds himself condemned to a species of slavery from the cradle to the grave. No wonder, then, that blasted hopes and irrepressible young ambitions are shaking the fortress of Communism to its very foundations.

Thus, under Stalin's régime the whole trend of Communism has been to segregate from the Russian people. It is now an isolated fortress, surrounded by millions of enemies without—at present powerless—and torn by dissensions within. The recent legislative measures of the government seem to show an acknowledgment that they have abandoned all hope of converting the peasants to Communism, and are now doing their utmost to secure their positions by making themselves independent of the peasants. The Communist Party, which ever way it turns, finds the peasants a thorn in its side. The only structure of society which was supposed to have been abolished by the Revolution has once again reappeared throughout the country, and the peasants have divided themselves into three classes: (1) The Kulaks (rich); (2) The Middle; (3) The Poor. The Kulaks are gradually absorbing the labour of the poor and hiring them out to work on their farms in return for payment in kind or for the loan of a horse, or a plough, or in some cases for a low wage. This is all wrong in the Communist conception of Society and the government of Stalin wishes to check it.

Thus the revolt against Stalin and his colleagues is widespread. Its ramifications extend throughout the rank and file of the Communist Party itself; the government is equally disliked by the Nepmen and the remnants of the old bourgeoisie and it is hated most of all by the peasants, who form the great mass of the Russian people, for the reasons I have explained.

It would appear that the pot is almost boiling over, and that affairs cannot continue as they are now. Another

few years of Stalin and Russia's economic ruin will be complete.

The only safety-valve is a gradual evolution towards the free circulation of capital in industry, and the throwing open of a market to the peasants which will encourage them to produce more grain than they are doing at present

CHAPTER XII

THE SEARCH FOR CAPITAL

"GIVE us capital, give us capital. We cannot restore Russia's economic position unless we get it." When you are in Russia, whether you are speaking with a member of the Politbureau, or of the Sovnarcom, or with the Commissars of the Treasury, or with the managers of the banks, or with any of the horde of lesser officials who make up this immense Red bureaucratic machine, there comes this same despairing call from all.

Yet this pathetic cry of the shipwrecked Communists is almost drowned in the hate, howls and hoots directed against the capitalist. What could be more absurd or illogical? On every fête day, in the processions, are placards and banners which depict the foreign capitalist as a cruel taskmaster, driving the workers before him in chains, or thrashing with a knout the wretched victims of his cupidity and greed. The streets of Moscow are festooned with such posters. The capitalist is not always having it his own way on the posters, for he is frequently portrayed being guillotined, hung on a gibbet, or being shoved into a red-hot oven by the indignant workers. In every speech made by the Commissars, in every article published in the papers, the capitalist and the bourgeoisie classes are held up as the pariahs of mankind, sucking the very life-blood from the miserable workers. "Capital must be destroyed" is the motto of the Soviet Government.

Apparently, therefore, the modified ideal of the Communists—forced on them by painful experience of their own colossal failure—is to destroy the capitalist but to borrow capital at all costs before his death. Presumably, capital was created by the capitalist, and once the existing stocks are exhausted, unless the latter continues to produce, the world's industrial machine must come to a complete standstill. This factor, however, does not seem to enter into the calculations of those who are howling for the extermination of the two pariah classes.

Another anomaly, which no Soviet official can explain, is how they can hope to borrow capital from abroad, while at the same time doing their utmost to undermine or destroy the class from whom they expect to obtain it.

In reality, the Politbureau has now abandoned all hope of bringing about a World Revolution. In the early days it was expected that all Europe would turn to Communism; that State control would become universal, and that all nations would start afresh on the same footing.

But these dreams have faded for ever and the Soviet Government has learned, in the bitter school of eleven years of failure, that State control can never hope to compete with the free circulation of capital in private enterprise. Therefore, to save their face, while keeping up the old-time propaganda amongst their own people, they are endeavouring to borrow from abroad the capital which they can no longer raise at home, in order to put their own industries and finances straight. They are now prepared to go to almost any lengths to obtain support from

the classes they once hoped to destroy. The morality is doubtful, but the issue is simple: "If you cannot kill an enemy, borrow his money."

There is thus a dual policy in Russia: State control for the Russian people, and the right of private enterprise for the foreigner, if he is prepared to bring his own money into the country.

It is not easy to see how these two fiscal policies can long thrive side by side. There cannot be one law for the rich stranger, and another for the poor Russian, indefinitely. Either the Russian must be put on equal terms with his foreign rival, or the latter will eventually find his property taken over by the State, and his capital confiscated. The contrast in relative prosperity produced by private enterprise when compared with State control would be too much for even the long-suffering Russian people to endure for ever.

What the Soviet Government would esteem a true *beau geste* on the part of the hated capitalist would be for the latter to make Russia a long-term loan of five hundred million pounds. With this sum the leaders consider they could put Russia on her financial feet for all time, without deviating from the straight and narrow path of true Communism. But the financial world is not responsive, and in consequence the government, much against its will, is obliged to try and induce capital to enter by conceding the right of private enterprise to the foreigner.

On the question of concessions there is a wide divergency of opinion. Some maintain that Russia offers a marvellous field for investment at the present time; others are equally vehement in their belief that every penny put into the

country will eventually be lost. Wherein lies the truth? Probably somewhere between the two views.

I know one Englishman, the head of a very big concern in Russia, who stoutly maintains that capital will be safe, and will pay enormous profits. "The only way," he reiterates, "to fight Bolshevism is with capital. In the end State control must succumb. Private enterprise must win."

Capitalists, however, as a rule, are not very brave and particularly dislike being killed off in the early stages of engagement with the enemy. It is certain that many must fall in the struggle with the Bolshevists, even if others are successful in the end. Thus, there is no gallant rush to be in the front ranks of the fighting line.

In Moscow you will find a number of persons of all nationalities who are eagerly hunting after concessions. I doubt whether many have the financial standing or backing to take them up; but they seek to get something on paper which they can exploit abroad. Their view is invariably the same: "We must renew relations. England is losing her future markets. The Americans and Germans will get everything. There never was such an opportunity for British capital to enter on the ground floor."

On the other hand, you will find the united body of diplomatic opinion resolutely against lending the Russian Government a penny under present conditions. I cannot do better than quote the words of a distinguished Minister who must be nameless:

"Under the existing system of State control and abolition of private enterprise—although this is gradually creeping back—it would be folly for the rest of the world to lend

Russia money. In my opinion, concessions to foreigners would be of little value under present conditions. Even if the men at the head of affairs grant a concession in good faith, intending to keep their agreement with the concessionaire, you have to overcome the machinery of the most highly developed bureaucracy in the world. It is only when you start to work your concession that you will find the hands of the lesser officials gripping at your throat at every turn. They do not acknowledge the authority of those at the top; they take their own line, and place so many obstacles in your way that it becomes impossible for you to carry out the conditions of your contract. Some Jews have taken up small concessions which they have worked successfully for a time, but in the end they invariably run up against a stone wall of official interference.

"There are certain to be enormous developments in Russia in the course of the next fifty years, and there will be great opportunities for European and American capital, but no move should be taken until State control of capital and industry has been abandoned by the leaders, and also until a definite settlement has been come to regarding the old debts. At the present time capital placed at the disposal of the government would merely mean bolstering up the Bolshevists for a further period of misrule, without providing any real safeguard for the repayment of capital and interest. The Communist administration has, in fact, reduced Russia to the position of a vast poverty-stricken Asiatic slum."

Here you have the opposite standpoint frankly expressed by one who knows conditions in Russia infinitely better than the would-be concessionaires.

The question of the payment of debts is, of course, one of the principal obstacles in the way of further loans. The attitude of the Soviet Government is quite clear. They accept the principle that a settlement must be made with the Committee of Foreign Bond-holders, but they decline to discuss the matter unless the question of a loan is dealt with at the same time. They consider, in fact, that about twenty per cent. of the par value would be a fair settlement. It is no use arguing with them, and pointing out that it is always customary to settle outstanding debts before asking for further loans from your creditor. They merely reply: "We do not even acknowledge the existence of this debt. It was contracted by the Tsarist Government and is not our affair. We are willing, however, as an act of grace, to make this concession to the old bond owners. But it is no use our coming to any agreement unless we get a loan, because, without it, we could not keep the arrangement we propose."

Here, in fact, is the whole case in a nutshell.

The greatest confession of failure ever made by a political party is the vast offer of concessions which is now being held out by the Soviet Government, to the capitalist world. Some of these should be of immense value, provided the concessionaires are given a free hand to deal with them on rational lines; and provided they are not stopped at every turn by difficulties placed in their way by a horde of petty bureaucratic officials, and by labour troubles fomented by the local Soviets.

These concessions are the legitimate heritage of the Russian people—neglected during the era of the Tsars but now ripe for exploitation. But owing to the dog-in-the-

manger policy of the Communists, who are unable to develop the resources of the country themselves and are determined not to allow Russians to do so, they are being offered wholesale to the foreign capitalist. I have, before me, thirty typewritten pages setting them forth in detail, and a document of twenty-three foolscap pages which contains the general terms of the contract under which the government is prepared to do a deal. Foreigners are not obliged to go to Russia and importune the government for the right to prospect for wealth; the benevolent Bolshevists have prepared the ground for them, and have provided a list of those concessions it considers most suitable. But there is the old motto: "Look a gift horse in the mouth." This gratuitous offer has aroused the suspicions of many who would like to trade with Russia. But yet the offer cannot be ignored.

It is a cardinal principle of Soviet policy to keep all Russian industries in Russian hands, i.e., under State control. The government has got into financial troubles because it can only provide working capital out of revenue. It now proposes to depart from strict Communism. I was speaking to a high official, and asked him how he could reconcile the Soviets' policy of keeping all industries under State control, with the wholesale offer of concessions to foreigners. He replied:

"We need foreign capital and foreign aid. If we could obtain credits from abroad we could restore Russia's economic prosperity in a vastly shorter time than we shall be able to do if we are compelled to rely on our own resources. We are forced to build up new industries out of revenue instead of capital. We have no fear that the granting of

concessions will once again enchain the Russian people in the financial coils of capitalist Europe. The country is so vast, and its riches are so great, that our offer—which will bring in some relief to the Treasury—will hardly constitute a departure from our ethics and ideals. You must remember that the soil of Russia has only been scratched by the Tsars. There is enough iron ore in a single province to supply the requirements of the whole world."

Thus, in the view of my informant, the concession to the capitalist will relieve the pressure on the Soviet Treasury, but will not touch enough of Russia's undeveloped wealth to make any serious blot on the Communist escutcheon.

Herein lies the germ of danger to the unwary concessionaire. He is to do the pioneer work to help the government out of its embarrassments, but there is to be no previous solemn recantation of Communist principles, or a declaration that the government acknowledges the right of private trade for all time. Under the present arrangement, the foreigner will be greatly handicapped because Russians, who understand the country better than he does, cannot co-operate with him on equal terms. If the Russians were allowed to form private companies amongst themselves, it would be easier to find foreign capital to finance them, than to expect the foreigner to start in on his own. He will need Russian experts and foremen, but he will only be able to employ them under conditions equally embarrassing for both parties.

In effect, every concession should be considered strictly on its own merits, and each contract with the government must be drawn up to meet its particular requirements. To

detail all the points necessary to safeguard, would take too long here, but advice should be sought from those who are already engaged in industry in Russia, and who have discovered, by bitter experience, the extraordinary number of pitfalls of which they never dreamt when they drew up their original agreements. Many of these have had to be amended since.

As you can only obtain the rate of exchange fixed by the Soviet Government for foreign currencies, you must insist on the right to send your profits out of Russia in gold at the same rate at which you brought it in ; otherwise, you will be ruined from the start. Fixed rates of pay must be drawn up for all grades of labour in advance, and the government must accept these ; otherwise the local Soviets will be causing trouble all the time, and you will have no power to deal with them unless the government is behind you. You must obtain political immunity for all your foremen and experts, most of whom will be drawn from the White Russian class ; otherwise, your business will be continually thrown out of joint, because they will suddenly disappear on unexpected journeys to that undiscovered area of Siberia, from whose bourne few prisoners return. You must settle exactly what taxes you are to pay, and what share of your profits is to go to the government. You must provide for arbitration in any dispute which may arise between you and the government over the interpretation of your contract, viz., a committee of three—one member appointed by the Soviets, one by yourself, and the third a foreign neutral. You can never hope to obtain any justice in a Soviet court, as the mere fact of your belonging to the capitalist class, would put you *hors de la*

loi. Neither would any judge dare to give a decision against the government. As the judges in Russia are ignorant workers and peasants they would not even understand the case.

Yet, when you imagine you have safeguarded yourself at every point, there will be endless obstacles to overcome.

The head of the Concessions Commission may draw up an agreement with you in absolutely good faith ; but you must not forget that the Soviet administration is the most complicated and tyrannical bureaucracy in the world. Satisfaction from the chiefs is no criterion that you have overcome the obstacles which will be put in your way by the lesser officials with whom you have to deal. You will find a vast amount of your time taken up filling in endless forms, and in answering futile letters. When you are finally held up, you will have to present to the government the usual ultimatum, namely, a threat to clear out of the country, in order to have these obstacles removed. As long as the government considers your presence in Russia is of value, it will aid you to overcome your difficulties. But there is always the danger it may prefer to take you at your word, and let you go, and then you will find your capital and your property lost, with no hope of compensation.

The penal laws in Russia are very severe over the relations between employers and employees. You may sign an agreement, the technical breaking of which may land you in gaol. Never sign anything for yourself. Keep a dummy director accustomed to spells in Soviet gaols.

A foreigner put the case to me, as follows :

"There is, undoubtedly, a field for foreign capital in Russia and there are enormous profits to be made, but this statement must be qualified by two words: 'when' and 'how.' There is such a famine in all kinds of manufactured goods that your market is ready made, waiting at the gates of your factory. In my opinion, if you can set up a factory, start producing at once, and put your goods on the market within six months, you are on fairly safe ground, provided your concession protects you on all essential points; but if you have to put capital into heavy industries, and lock it up for four or five years, why then I would advise no one to invest money in Russia under present conditions."

These are the considered views of a business man who is by birth a Russian, but an American citizen, who knows the Russian administration from A to Z, and who is engaged in a successful business.

Neither can the foreigner afford to ignore the fate of the Russian Nepmen, who sprang up after Lenin realized that State control of industries was reducing Russia to ruin. Lenin intended to create this class in the interests of industry, and also to furnish the income-tax-payers of the future. He never intended they should be exterminated the moment their labours came to fruition. Lenin realized that the Nepmen must be allowed to make reasonable profits; his policy was to prevent them becoming too powerful by heavy taxation. But his successors have not carried out his wishes. They have not succeeded in suppressing the Nepman, but they have done their best to make his life impossible. Over and over again, little groups of Russians have banded themselves together to

start some tiny industry without capital, and the moment they have succeeded in accumulating a little by sheer hard work, the Soviet officials step in and confiscate the lot; or take over the business without compensation, kick out those who have built it up, and install Communists in their place. The unhappy Nepman then finds himself on the street again.

There is no reason why the foreign concessionaire should not become an international Nepman. Supposing the government really got on its financial feet again, and felt a return of that self-assurance and independence it has lost of late, it is hardly likely it will allow the foreigner to remain the only individual capitalist in the country. The glaring example of what private trading can accomplish would be unhealthy for the younger generation just entering upon their careers, who would surely ask awkward questions as to why there was one law for the stranger, and another for the Russian. It would be very easy for the government to get rid of any concessionaires whose businesses they desired to take over. A word here, a hint there, and the work would come to a standstill. Labour troubles can be easily fermented.

Last and least, it must always be borne in mind that any money put into Russia at the present time will be a great material and moral support to the present administration. What it can do towards the development of Russia's resources will be very small compared to the effect it will have in bolstering up a government inimical to the capitalist and bourgeoisie class. It is for the capitalist to decide whether he wishes to support the Big Nine in the Kremlin, who are out to destroy him, or to wait for a

change in the Communist Party—the evolution which must eventually bring back a return to private trading. He should also consider the moral principle involved. Is it fair to trade to his own advantage at the expense of the Russian people, until that change is brought about ?

CHAPTER XIII

MILITARY ORGANIZATIONS OF SOVIET RUSSIA

DURING the past two years the Soviet Government has frequently expressed a wish to come to an agreement with other European nations, to reduce armaments to the minimum, commensurate with the preservation of internal order in each State. The Government has also expressed its desire to join with other nations in signing the Kellogg Pact outlawing war. These advances have met with a somewhat cold reception, because there is a general mistrust of the good faith of the Bolshevists, and a belief prevalent that these proposals are merely a kind of camouflage to conceal Russia's hostile intentions against the border states of Poland, Latvia, Esthonia, and Lithuania. There is also a lack of precise information as to the strength and organization of the Soviet armies. Yet there is little doubt that for the time being, at any rate, the Soviet Government contemplates no aggressive action, and is most anxious to avoid war at any cost. This is not due to altruism but to expediency. The Government of Stalin is so beset by enemies and troubles at home, and abroad; the finances of Russia are in such a chaotic state, and the difficulties of mobilizing the army are so great, that a foreign war is regarded as a graver menace to the Communist Party than to the country against whom it might be waged.

If you are in Russia and discuss the possibilities of a

counter-revolution with Russians, or members of the Corps Diplomatique, you will invariably receive the same reply, viz., "A counter-revolution is quite out of the question at the present time; the government is far too powerful and well organized. The only chance of the Communist party being turned out, is in the event of an unsuccessful war; or by a successful general who, having obtained great prestige through his victories, suddenly marches against the Kremlin." The Soviet Government lives in constant dread of one of these events happening, and that is why it is not adverse to an international agreement which would enable it to reduce the regular army, while in no way weakening its power at home. The Communist Party fears that the army may drift apart from the body politic, and become an independent class in the State, and that a leader may arise who will place himself at the head of the opposition and endeavour to overthrow the Politbureau. It is, therefore, the policy of the government to preserve peace at all costs and, if possible, to put the regular army on a territorial footing which will enable the Communist Party to exercise greater local supervision over the leaders.

Russia to-day possesses the biggest army in Europe in actual numbers, if not relatively, considering the size of her population, and the immense extent of her territory. But its organization, general staff, equipment, and armament leave much to be desired, and fall far short of many other European armies. There are such illimitable reserves of men in the country that if the organization, equipment, and armaments existed, there is really no limit to the number of men Russia could put into the field; but they do not exist, and the lines of communication are so few that it is impossible

for the Government to mobilize a large number of troops in any threatened quarter. That Russia may become a grave military menace to Europe in the future is always within the bounds of possibility, but I am only dealing with the situation as it exists to-day.

The armed forces of the Soviet Republic must be divided under four heads: (1). The Regular Army. (2). The Territorial Army. (3). The Army of the G.P.U. (4). The Army for the Defence of Industry. The latter can be disposed of quickly. It is formed of industrial workers, and is distributed throughout the big towns, but there is no unit in it bigger than a company, and it only numbers thirty thousand in all. It is not organized for service against neighbouring States.

I have already dealt with No. 3, the Army of the G.P.U., in Chapter V.

The Bolshevists do not encourage those who seek information about the army. When I arrived in Moscow I was asked what I would like to see. I explained I was particularly interested in military matters, that I would like to visit the troops and see them at work and in barracks. I also requested information on many military questions. I was invited to draw up a list of these, and to forward it to the military authorities. I asked the most pertinent questions I could think of, but they seem to have been considered impertinent for I never received any reply, and I was never granted permission to visit the troops. I can only judge of them from what I saw and from what I heard. The divisions in Moscow and Leningrad are composed of fine-looking men, infinitely smarter and keener than the old hordes of brutish peasants who filled the

ranks under the Tsars. They are well equipped and well turned out. But it must not be supposed that the whole of the regular divisions are as efficient and smart as those in the capital.

On a peace footing the Regular Army numbers some five hundred and fifty thousand officers and men. It is the only force, except the troops of the G.P.U., which is kept fully mobilized during the winter months. When all the Territorial divisions are mobilized in the summer, the total strength of the army amounts to about one million five hundred thousand. There are sixty-two divisions in the army, of which thirty-nine are Territorial at the present time.

Russia is divided into the following nine military zones:

OKROUG MILITAIRES DE L'U.R.S.S.

Okroug Militaire de Moscou (MVO).*
Okroug Militaire de Leningrad (LVO).
Okroug Militaire de la Russie Blanche (BVO)—Smolensk.
Okroug Militaire de l'Ukraine (UVO).
Okroug Militaire de la Volga (PRIVO)—Saratof.
Okroug Militaire du Caucase Septentionale (SKVO) Rostov S/D.
Okroug Militaire de la Siberie (SVO)—Novo Sibirsk.
Okroug Militaire de l'Asie Centrale (SAVO)—Samarkand.
Okroug Militaire du Drapeau Rouge (KKA).—Riflis.
Commissariat militaire du Kasakstan—Kril—Orda.

Each zone holds its own manœuvres in its own area. Grand

* The Corps are known by these letters.

manœuvres of the whole army have never yet been attempted on account of the high cost and difficulties of communication.

The infantry of the regular army are conscripted for two years; the artillery for three, and the cavalry for four. At least ninety per cent. of the men are of the peasant class. Each soldier, with his pay, accoutrements, and food, costs the government twenty-two roubles per month. The Russian divisions consist of three regiments of three battalions each, and the latter are about six hundred strong. Each battalion has two guns, a thirty-seven centimetre, and a Minnewerfer, which are manned by infantrymen specially trained for this purpose. But the battalion artillery is not up to full strength. Each regiment has, in principle, three two-gun seventy-six centimetre groups attached to it, but it is not yet up to full strength.

Each battalion has heavy machine-gun detachments, which are turned out in large quantities in Russia, and also, on paper, light machine-guns (corresponding to Lewis guns), but it has not yet been found possible to make these satisfactorily in the Russian arsenals. In the recent manœuvres many of the light machine-guns, and also some of the artillery, were merely wooden dummies.

Cavalry brigades, especially those about Moscow, appear on the whole to be the most efficient force in Russia. They did very well on the recent manœuvres. The divisional artillery consists of both field guns and heavy howitzers, but it is not up to full strength.

The Territorial Divisions are only mobilized for short periods during the summer months. The first year, the recruits are trained for three months in the depôts and take

no part in the manœuvres. For the next four years they serve for four months each year. The Territorials are practically all recruited from the peasant class. The equipment of the Russian Army is poor, and not up-to-date. The rifles vary, some being of the 1912 model and some of a later date.

Nearly all the officers of the Regular and Territorial armies are drawn from the ranks of the Communist Party. There are many Letts, Georgians and Jews. They can enter the army in two ways; either through the military schools, or by rising from the ranks. There are selection boards all over Russia which carefully examine the qualifications of would-be aspirants to the Officers' Corps. The chief object is to discover if the political principles of the candidates are sound. The age of retirement is very young, and causes much discontent. Generals must go at fifty: colonels and commandants at forty-five; captains and aides to captains at forty.

There are fourteen military grades in the Soviet Army ranging from corporals to generals. These grades are divided into three groups: (1) Lower; (2) Middle; (3) Upper. The Lower comprises all the non-commissioned officers; the Middle, officers up to the rank of captain; the Upper, up to the rank of General. The salute has been abolished but the superiority of the Officers' Corps is acknowledged by the men, and there is a movement on foot to restore the salute.

The officers form a class apart from the men. They live separately and, in some cases, have started regimental messes. On manœuvres they are fed by caterers from various co-operative stores, who bring the necessary

supplies to the front where they are purchased either individually or by the messes. Officers draw rations free.

The work is extremely severe, and in no other army are the officers and men kept so continually at drill or at study. It has thus been possible to retire the majority of the old Tsarist officers. The process was started three years ago and has been going on ever since.

The government even published a form of apology in the press for this enforced measure. While thanking them for their great services, it went on to say that conditions were changing; that the old Officers' Corps would not last indefinitely, and that if the army was to become efficient, the new officers must learn to handle it and take entire charge. The manifesto then ended up with the real truth: "It is important that the armies should be directed by those whose political principles are known to conform with those of the Communist Party."

Those in the N.C.O. grades can apply to be allowed to enter one of the Officers' schools with a view to obtaining a commission. They are subjected to a rigorous examination as to their ability, and the purity of their political principles. Practically all the officers are drawn from the ranks of the industrial workers in the cities.

The Ecole Superieure de la Guerre trains officers for the General Staff. It is established in Moscow and selections are made very carefully from amongst the most intelligent officers and fanatical Communists.

It is the constant preoccupation of the Soviet Government to maintain a complete control of and espionage over the regular army. It is the ever present fear of the

Politbureau that the army may segregate, and form a caste apart from the Party, and one day bring about a *coup d'état* under some popular chief. To prevent this the Bolshevists maintain the political control of each battalion. This is done in the following manner : Each regiment possesses a club where the men receive a semi-political and semi-general education when they are not drilling on the barrack square. They are carefully instructed in the ethics and principles of Communism and have drummed into their ears over and over again the dangers which threaten "Holy" Russia from the aggression of capitalist states. Of these aggressors England stands in the foreground ; the United States has receded in popular hate, so France comes second, with Italy as a good third. Poland is named as the instrument through which other European powers will attempt to carry out their malevolent designs against the peace-loving Russian proletariat. The government hopes to send back the mass of the peasant recruits to their villages stout converts and supporters of Communism.

The Regimental School is for the education of the army, but each battalion is watched most carefully by a kind of Vigilance Committee, which is known as the Cellule. This Cellule is composed of officers, N.C.O's. and men, who must be all members of the Communist Party. It is their duty to notify to the authorities any backslidings from the true faith they may discover in the battalion, whether amongst officers, N.C.O's. or men. They are like the Jacobin Clubs of the French Revolution ; or a better simile would be the Commissioners appointed under the Terror to accompany every General in the field and pre-warn the government of any attempt at a *coup d'état.*

It is the Cellule which directs the education in the regimental schools.

The Cellule is not supposed to interfere with purely military orders given by superior officers, but if the men refuse to obey their commanders for political reasons, or are not satisfied with their treatment or rations, they can appeal for redress to the Cellule. Discipline is, however, very strictly maintained, and minor offences—punished in other armies by a few days' confinement to camp—are much more severely dealt with. The men are not judged by their officers, but are handed over to a Workmen's Tribunal for judgment and punishment.

On the recent manœuvres the troops showed moderate capacity. The regular divisions were good, the cavalry excellent, but the Territorial troops showed considerable lack of training. The orders of the higher command were only of moderate skill, and the General Staff is probably inferior to that of any other European army.

It is difficult to say what the army really thinks. The rank and file are drawn from the ranks of the peasants who have no love for the present régime. They are constantly receiving letters from their families telling them of hardships, shortage of food, inability to sell at a good price, and lack of manufactured goods. Every effort is made to right these grievances when they are reported to the Cellule.

There are indications that the Officers' Corps is gradually assuming a more concrete form, providing a rift in the lute of social equality all round. Officers are known to criticize severely the government and its many shortcomings. They are also dissatisfied with the treatment of Trotsky. On the other hand, the espionage system is so efficient that it would

be difficult for a revolt to break out in the army without the government having very full and precise warning.

There is now some talk of disbanding the Regular Army, and confining the defence of the country to the Territorial formations. The reason stated is that it takes too long to mobilize the regular army in time of war, whereas the Territorial troops, based on their own localities, can be brought up to strength in a few days. The regular troops have to come from all parts of Russia. I imagine the real reason is that the Communists feel they can keep a better hold on the Territorial troops. They are afraid of the regular army gradually becoming independent of the party machine.

There are constant changes taking place in the higher commands, chiefly for political reasons. If a general becomes too popular or is suspected of having leanings towards the right, he is invariably relegated to some distant command. It is difficult for the best men to remain long on the General Staff. The early age of retirement is also a source of discontent. On the other hand, officers rise to high commands extremely young.

CHAPTER XIV

LENIN'S TOMB. OPERAS AND THEATRES. MANNERS. SHOPPING

THE longer you stay in Russia the greater becomes your dislike of the Soviet administration, whatever opinion you may hold of the individuals who compose it. Tyranny, brutality, and persecution, without reason, seem to be the basis of its existence. The Revolution was at first received with enthusiasm by the masses, because they welcomed it as the dawn of a new era of freedom. But no people have ever jumped so completely out of the frying-pan into the fire as have the Russians. They are now a race of card-marked slaves, who can only find work through their masters, whose private lives are regulated by decrees, and who are dependent like sheep on obedience for food, housing, and clothes. There are certain favoured classes of whom I have already spoken, but they form an infinitesimal percentage of the population. Ninety-eight per cent. are now born slaves, live as slaves, and are buried as slaves. Russia is, in fact, a vast prison from which only few escape to freedom in other countries.

The remains of the man who is primarily responsible for the ruin of a great and prosperous country lies in a temporary tomb in the Red Square. His mausoleum is only made of wood. His final resting-place yet remains to be fixed. Red Guards stand outside on guard night and day, and when there is a queue more police are hurried to the spot

to shepherd the throng. On descending some wooden steps, you first notice three thermometers on the wall and a Red Guard with his eye constantly fixed on them. Should the temperature rise beyond a certain point, more cold air is immediately admitted into the death-chamber, for Lenin's body shows a tendency, like his theories, to crumble into dust. You enter the death-chamber, and walk along a wooden platform separated from his coffin by a bronze rail. The little man, now shrunk much to below life-size, is lying in his coffin, which has a glass top. You are not allowed to linger, for a single glance at the Master is considered enough for his followers; but I happened to choose a day when there was no one about, so the Red Guards allowed me to stop as long as I pleased. Lenin, in his tomb, bears a remarkable resemblance to his published photographs and paintings. The embalmers have done their work well, and the German doctors who extracted his brain have not spoilt his features. But it is doubtful if the corpse can be preserved much longer, and it is rumoured that Lenin will very soon make his last appearance in public.

How do the mass of the Russians regard him? This riddle is not easy to answer. His tomb is as sacrosanct to your true Communist as is Mecca to your true Mohammedan; but as Communism has taken no hold on the mass of the Russian people, it is unlikely that they regard him as a saint. I think the feeling is one of immense curiosity. When I first arrived in Moscow there were generally eager crowds waiting in long queues to visit his tomb, composed mostly of visitors from the provinces. These fell off towards the end of my stay, until in the latter weeks there

was frequently not a soul waiting to descend into the death-chamber. It is true the weather had become much colder, and there may be a tourist season for visiting the tomb. I imagine that the vast mass of the public who pass through this temporary vault go there simply out of curiosity, because it is the thing to do—one of the sights of the city. It would be indeed foolish for a visitor to Moscow to say he had come away without having visited the dead Lenin; and it would be even dangerous for a Russian to admit he had never been there.

There are some fanatical Communists to whom Lenin and his works are truly sacrosanct, and they will spend hours gazing spellbound on the features of their saint, whose strange theories overturned a dynasty, and ruined the industrial life of a nation of one hundred and fifty millions, within six months of their being put into execution.

This achievement alone entitles Lenin to a high place amongst the world's destroyers. He stands only second to Ghengis Khan as the most destructive force which has ever arisen in Asia.

There are thousands of pilgrims to his shrine, who now believe that Lenin was something quite different to what he really was. They have already forgotten the appalling chaos which prevailed under his régime, the anarchy, massacres, ruin of industry, famine, and destruction of home life, and believe he was prematurely cut off just at the commencement of a period of reconstruction and prosperity. Unfavourable comparisons are now drawn between the present leaders and the master mind which conceived and carried through the people's Revolution. Thus awe rather than reverence attaches to his memory. Not many

Russians really cross themselves when passing his tomb; neither are many prayers uttered for the repose of his soul. Lenin dead and turned to clay—except to the fanatical few who are forcing their will and his early teachings on a people 98 per cent. of whom are "fed up" with both—represents little more than a strange monster, whom all should see before he is finally laid underground. It is unlikely that his teachings will ever occupy an important place in Russia, because he was obliged to repudiate almost all of his preconceived theories before his death. His life-long studies and conclusions turned out to be incapable of practical realization, and have led to the most disastrous upheaval known to history. With commendable courage Lenin admitted his mistakes, and set to work to endeavour to rectify his errors, but the end came too soon, and his successors are now floundering deeper and deeper in the mire of economic ruin and bankruptcy which the Master's strange theories created.

Yet it is impressive to gaze at this little Russian with the Mongol features and Tartar head, lying in his last eternal sleep. No one knows yet whether his work is destined to live, or whether he will appear in the pages of history as some curious inexplicable phenomenon in a troubled epoch, who served no useful purpose. At present his achievements entitle Lenin to be described as the world's greatest housebreaker. Perhaps he was necessary to destroy the old Russian edifice, in order that a new and prosperous Russia may rise amidst the ruins. At present there is no sign of the new building; only the vast heaps of rubbish and rubble created by the Master remain.

Lenin in his tomb is symbolical of the Revolution. As

long as he remains undisturbed in the Red Square, the world knows the period of reconstruction has not yet commenced. When his body is removed millions of Russians will really believe a new epoch of hope and reconstruction has begun.

There are no other entertainments for the proletariat in Moscow, except a visit to Lenin's tomb, or to the theatres, Opera, cinemas and music-halls.

The Soviet Government is proud of the manner in which it has kept the Opera, the theatres, and the cinemas constantly open in spite of many difficulties. They are employed as a valuable adjunct in their vast system of propaganda. Hardly an opera, a play, or a picture is ever produced unless it upholds the ethics of Communism at the expense of Capitalism. The Englishman is a favourite character and is invariably portrayed as a brutal taskmaster flogging Chinese, Indians and black men with a whip, to force them to work. The clothes worn by the English make you scream with laughter. In the Opera "The Red Poppy," a favourite piece, the officers and officials are made up to resemble a cross between actors, guardsmen, and yachtsmen. In the end the wretched victims of England's imperialism are invariably rescued by the timely arrival of the noble Bolshevists, who restore the native populations to their erstwhile freedom. But propaganda has lost all its effect on the mass of the Russians. Communism has paid no dividends for eleven years and the directors can no longer expect the original prospectus to be read over and over again by the shareholders with any great enthusiasm. The people attend these performances for other reasons.

The Opera, the theatres, and the music-halls are invariably packed to suffocation. They provide warmth from the cold, a pleasing contrast to the eternal greyness and melancholy of the streets, and to the squalor and misery prevailing in the homes of the spectators. The poorest can gaze for a mere song on the works of the dead masters of the past; and on the productions of the new school of Red authors; they can watch the gyrations of the most graceful artists of the Terpsichorean art, and they can listen to the finest of the voices of those singers who have not succeeded in escaping to warmer climes and higher salaries from this poverty-stricken, semi-frozen Asiatic prison. But these same poor never gaze on white bread, or butter, or milk, or tea, and seldom on a full dinner-pail. After all, a shapely ankle and well-turned calf or angelic voice are poor substitutes, when your stomach is empty, for a fat mutton chop or juicy beef steak. The intellectual and æsthetic senses of the public are catered for by a paternal government, while their stomachs are half-filled with foodstuffs which can be ill spared from what is required for cattle, horses and swine.

The workers have the right to enter the Opera and theatres at greatly reduced prices on presentation of their co-operative or union cards. I believe the majority get in for nothing at all. In consequence, the Opera presents the appearance of having been invaded by hordes from the East End of London. No one wears evening clothes except members of the Corps Diplomatique. All the interior glories of the Opera House remain: its gaudy gilding and red trappings have not been touched, but this crowd looks strangely out of place amidst these old

Imperial surroundings. Full-fledged Communists now occupy the Royal Box. If you are invited by the Directors to their private box you must take your chance of finding a seat amidst a crowd of Bolshevists and their lady friends. The mass of the Russian people are so down-trodden and stricken with poverty, misery, and fear that they have become almost inarticulate. They huddle together in the theatres and gaze in open-mouthed astonishment on the scenes depicted on the stage, so unlike anything in their own lives. They never applaud or display the slightest emotion. Apparently all are in fear of doing so at the wrong moment at some reference which might not find favour with the authorities. But if you give them a lead by clapping your hands, they will sometimes join in. The faces of the audience are lifeless, expressing neither memory of the past, regret for the present, nor hope for the future.

It is the ambition of every Russian artist with real talent to escape from Russia to Western Europe or to the United States, where he or she can earn real money. But the Soviet Government will not allow them to leave, finding them useful to entertain the public. Some have, however, succeeded in getting away and but few return. The finest *ballerina* seen in Russia for a decade is now dancing in the Opera at Leningrad. That city will not allow her to come to Moscow for fear the authorities will compel her to stay. The Soviet Government has held out a tentative promise that, if she works in Russia for three years, she will be granted a passport to go abroad. The artists are wretchedly paid. The best of the *ballerine* can only earn two hundred and fifty roubles a performance. But as they seldom appear more than three or four times a month, their salaries cannot

average a thousand roubles a month. But this sum is far higher than what can be earned by any other class, and, in consequence, they are looked upon as a favoured clique, protected by the government. Some, it is said, have even been allowed to preserve their jewels and their old apartments.

All the theatres are run by the government at a great loss. Even with the low prices paid to the artists they cannot be made to pay, but the government looks upon this deficit, which has to be made up out of State funds, with equanimity, because it is all part of their propaganda to keep the people contented, or rather that section of the people which supports the Communist Party. On one occasion, when the Opera was packed, I asked the amount of the total receipts. I was told 5,500 roubles, which was considered a very big sum, but I think this figure was fictitious. There were over two hundred artists on the stage at one time. Melba or Caruso used to receive more than this for a single performance.

I would advise all who go to Russia to spend some time at the Opera and in the theatres. There you can really study the Russian people *en masse*, as they appear to-day, in their few hours of relaxation from the eternal struggle for existence. You can also see the absurd lengths to which authors are expected to go in order to provide the right mental food for the people. The heights of futility are reached.

Personally, I derived but scant pleasure from the Opera or the Theatre, after the first feeling of curiosity had been satisfied. Naturally this was partly due to the fact that you cannot fully enjoy a play or an opera unless you understand

the language, or know the story in advance. But as all plays in Russia are based on propaganda in favour of the Communists, and invariably represent the triumph of the Reds over the White Russians, or of the Bolshevists over the British and other tyrannical capitalist nations, the story is soon picked up. What spoils all artistic pleasure in the Opera and in the theatres is the squalor, the dirt, and the miserable aspect presented by the audience. As but a few have the means of performing any regular ablutions in Russia, the aroma from this packed mass of unwashed humanity is nauseating. The finest Opera house and the most magnificent singing and acting are spoilt, if there are no beautiful women and well-dressed men to fill the boxes and stalls, and provide the right setting. In Russia the audience appears incongruous and out of place. It is horrible to have to rub shoulders with this Communist throng. You know they detest you, and they know you do not love them. The only possible way to visit the Opera is with some member of the Corps Diplomatique. They have the right to engage an entire box, and then at least you can enjoy some privacy. It is curious to see a single box filled with well-dressed women, wearing jewels, and men in evening suits, amidst an ocean of down-trodden, half-starved, poverty-stricken proletars, who spend half their time gazing at the stage, and the other half at this little island of capitalism, which diplomatic custom and courtesy allow to appear in all the finery of the pre-revolutionary days. Amidst the audience are invariably dispersed innumerable agents of the G.P.U. In your box or in the waiting-rooms during the *entr'actes* foreigners are dogged by these pests. They sidle up to you in the most unblush-

ing manner in order to overhear your conversation. It is amusing to start some innocent conversation in a very secretive manner to make them believe you are plotting against the State, or criticizing the Soviet administration. The eavesdroppers creep up to your shoulder and then you suddenly move on elsewhere. The folly of all this is obvious. As if anyone with guilty designs in his mind would publicly discuss them with his friends in the theatre ! A Russian audience, in fact, looks and behaves like a flock of scared sheep, waiting to be led to the slaughter house. Yet I suppose these performances do come as a relaxation in the grey lives of those who have no other means of amusing themselves. Sport does not exist ; social intercourse has been reduced to a minimum ; there are no means of taking exercise apart from walking in the streets, except in the winter when you can skate, which many indulge in because it costs nothing.

The Grand Hotel is the head-quarters of most foreigners visiting Moscow. It is amazing how limited is your social circle. There are the members of the Embassies and Legations—and who else ? A few foreign representatives of the Press : whom one can name on one's fingers. You will generally find a few foreigners in the Grand. Most of them are Germans preparing the ground for a great trade push. There are also some stray English and Canadians, each representative of a particular "ism." Some are avowed Communists, others are a cross between the two, and the rest generally describe themselves as having come to Russia "to try and bring about better relations between two old friends." Almost all these "ists" have a second axe to grind apart from their "ism." They believe in

concessions, and are not at all averse to taking a bit of paper home signed by the Chief of the Concessions Board. In addition there are a number of Russo-American social workers with U.S.A. passports for protection, and U.S.S.R. principles for insuring themselves a good time while in Russia. The restaurant of the Grand Hotel is a unique psychological study during the dinner hour. To those I have mentioned must be added the Russians. But who are they ? This is the mystery. What Russians can afford to have their meals there, and at the same time not depart from the true Communist principle of touching only 250 roubles per month maximum ? I must confess this problem completely baffles me.

The problem should be a simple mathematical one, viz : What are the relative number of days you must go without food if your salary is 250 roubles a month, and each meal costs you at the Grand not less than 5 roubles at a minimum ? You are fifty roubles out on the actual eating days at one meal per diem, and have nothing for rents, taxes, clothes, locomotion and sundries. It is true there are experts who can earn as much as a thousand roubles a month ; some of the guests are Commissars, and heads of co-operative stores who enjoy special terms ; others are travellers from distant parts of Russia, who have nowhere to stop except in an hotel, and must pay accordingly ; others are Mongols, Tartars and Chinese, to whom the Soviet laws are not applied so strictly. All this may be true, but still the impression remains on the mind that there are many Bolshevists who have managed to enlarge their lawful salaries at the expense of their Communist principles.

Yet it is a fact that but few would dare be seen at the

Grand Hotel every day of the week for dinner, or supper, unless stopping in the hotel. There would certainly be awkward questions asked, and I have heard cases quoted of *bon viveurs* being suddenly stopped in the middle of a course, and asked to go round to G.P.U. headquarters for a friendly explanation.

All sorts of strange individuals come in to dinner. I remember one man wearing an order pinned to his coat, and when I asked him what it was, he replied, " The only decoration permitted in Russia is for those who have been imprisoned in Siberia." I replied : " Does the same society provide medals for all those you are sending there ? " He thought this a good joke, and laughed heartily. In fact, nothing changes in Russia. The exiles sent to Siberia by the Tsar are still exchanging a friendly " How do you do ? " with those sent by the Bolshevists whom they pass on the road. The returning exile is likely enough to find a room in the house of the man he has passed *en route*. The new exile may occupy the hovel or cell of his uninvited guest in Siberia. So life goes on.

Whatever the Bolshevists have accomplished, or whatever they have failed to do, they have certainly succeeded in lowering the standard of life in an amazing fashion. They set out to place the working-man in the position formerly filled by the aristocracy and bourgeois ; they have left ninety-eight per cent. of the population worse off than they were before. I believe there are six thousand taxis in London, and I have no idea how many there are in Paris and New York. All I do know is, that there are one hundred and seventeen motor vehicles for hire in Moscow, and practically no private cars except those belonging to

the Embassies and Commissars. There is no room for any more taxis, because no one can afford to hire them. Thus Communism, judged by the spending power of the public, is somewhat of a failure.

There are many who believe that the Terror no longer exists; there could not be a greater error. It is ever at work, and, since the departure of the British Mission, has been worse. Arrests are being carried out incessantly in Moscow and Leningrad. You have only to go out after midnight, when the traffic has stopped, and the only vehicles you will meet will be the Black Crows (the G.P.U. prison vans) rushing through the streets at break-neck speed. Even the closest relatives are afraid to talk about these arrests, and seldom dare inquire into the fate of the victims. It has become a kind of point of honour to indulge in no lamentations and to make no complaints. Manifested sympathy is likely to involve you in the misfortune of the departed one. Sorrow and despair must be hidden in the privacy of the home. An arrest, an exile, or an execution, are now accepted as the visitations of an all-foreseeing providence. But the fear and the horror remain. Life is, in fact, a dreadful nightmare for the majority of the Russian people. The only ambition left is to escape the clutches of the G.P.U. All idea of a pleasant and prosperous life has long since been abandoned. The menace hangs over the people like a plague. Many seem to have a forewarning that their hour is come.

In another generation it will be almost impossible to identify Russian families who belonged to the upper and middle classes of the old régime. Life is a perpetual search for false identification papers. In all other countries it is a

legitimate ambition to prove oneself a gentleman, either by birth or education, and to provide oneself with a coat of arms. In Russia it is your paramount desire to prove that you are neither a gentleman by birth nor by education, and that your family has always belonged to the dregs of the population. A political leader who tried to raise party funds by the sale of titles would go broke inside of twenty-four hours in Russia, but a leader who tried to raise money by selling certificates of humble origin would amass an immense chest of gold—if gold existed.

Another curious feature which Bolshevism has introduced into the Russian character is the fear of everyone to make themselves agreeable. Good manners are taboo in public, as they are apparently the outward sign of good birth and breeding. But the Russians are notably polite by nature, and when you get them alone this veneer of roughness immediately disappears. Every action of every individual, from Stalin to a third-class peasant, is based on self-protection. This is the *idée fixe* in everyone's mind.

I am often asked : " What are the shops like in Russia ? " It is not easy to explain. All the organized workers belong to different Labour Unions and have co-operate cards which enable them to make their purchases at state-controlled co-operative stores. These stores seem to be eternally crowded with people in search of goods, and to judge from the waiting queues one would imagine the spending power of the Russian people to be very high. As a matter of fact, but few can afford to buy anything except the bare necessities of life, and the appearance of crowding is produced by the chronic shortage in all manufactured goods. When you enter a co-operative store you are struck by the slovenly

appearance ; there is no attempt at window dressing ; you miss the smart lady shoppers, and you notice that all are out to buy a specific article, not to linger over the counters. I went to buy a pair of goloshes, accompanied by my interpreter. We tried several stores, but were turned away, either because they had none of the size I required, or because they were so short that they could only sell to those with co-operative tickets. Finally I obtained a pair in a G.P.U. Co-operative. I went up to a counter in a long queue and waited until my turn came. The salesman then asked me to put my foot on the counter, and then selected the right size. I was then handed a ticket with a number on it, and the price. I then joined another queue in front of the cashier's box. When I paid I was handed a receipt, and joined yet another queue which led to a third counter where the purchased articles were handed to me in exchange for the receipted ticket. In purchasing any article from a co-operative store you pass through the same procedure.

Although you see few luxury buyers in Russia you certainly see a considerable number of luxury shops in the main streets of Moscow. They look just as smart and well-stocked as those in London or Paris ; but you miss the jewellers. Clocks, watches, and cheap bracelets are sold and there are shops stocked with nickel-plated goods ; there are luxurious perfumeries, and there are many flower shops and chocolate shops. I never could find out who bought scents, chocolates, plate and flowers. Yet there must be a sale. There must be springing up some professional class in Russia which is gradually making money and putting it aside, and which can afford to buy these luxuries

which are beyond the reach of all but a few. It is all further proof that universal equality of wealth cannot exist, and that if you rob one class and beggar them, wealth will only pass into the hands of another.

There are some very imposing provision stores. Most of these are co-operatives, but some are run by Nepmen. They seem to provide almost everything: fish, vodka, wines, hams, sausages, caviar and fruit are all sold over the same counter. There is no such thing as delivery in Russia, and everyone carries away his own purchases. The Embassies and Legations are in the same position, and every day someone must sally forth to purchase what is required. Credit is quite unknown. You must have the ready money on you or go supperless to bed—unless a friend takes compassion on you. The general impression left on my mind, after passing through some of the central shopping streets of Moscow, was that of a city well supplied with goods, but with a population too poor and ill-clad to buy anything except the bare necessities of life. Yet business is carried on; I am told, however, that the sales in these luxury shops are very limited.

CHAPTER XV

SOCIAL ENTERTAINMENTS. WOMEN IN RUSSIA

SOCIAL life is very restricted in Moscow. No Russians dare receive strangers, and in any case it is almost impossible to entertain if your allowance of room-space is only six cubic metres per head. But they do foregather from time to time amongst themselves and have a Dutch treat, and it has been my privilege to be invited on several occasions. These parties are generally confined to those connected with the theatrical profession, as artists alone seem to escape from the suspicions and persecutions of the G.P.U.

The Soviet Government is very hospitable. The entertaining of foreigners falls on the Foreign Office, of which Tchicherin is the titular head; but he has not been seen in Moscow for many months owing to bad health and is unlikely to return, so Litvinov is the acting Commissar for Foreign Affairs. The Litvinovs live and entertain in the huge Kharotonenko House, which formerly belonged to Moscow's sugar king. Nothing has been changed, and there are excellent reception rooms.

Whether you are being entertained at an Embassy, or by the Soviet Foreign Office, you know pretty well whom you are going to meet beforehand. No Russians, except officials, are invited, and you soon become acquainted with the Corps Diplomatique. Yet these dinners, lunches and evening receptions, with music and dancing, are a

godsend to the visitor, as there is little or nothing to do in Moscow, once winter darkness settles over the city at 4 p.m. When you have exhausted the theatres, operas and cinemas you must fall back on your own resources. I think all "gate-crashers" would be forgiven in Moscow.

An invitation to lunch, or dinner, or to a soirée in Moscow has a significance which you seldom find elsewhere. You never hear a blasée society woman remarking: "Oh, what a bore! I must go to the Embassy to-night!" "Oh, what a bore! We are invited to dinner at the W.," or, "Is it really necessary to turn out to-night for the V's. dance?"

A dinner invitation to an Embassy or Legation means, quite apart from the personal attraction of your host and hostess and their guests, a good meal which you cannot get elsewhere. When you have been living for weeks on the bad food in the hotels, these repasts become epoch-marking events in your gastronomic life, and you save up your appetite against the happy hour. Supposing there is a soirée at 10 p.m., with music and dancing, no Commissar or stranger stopping in the hotels would think of dining first. You know you are going to get a good supper with the viands imported from abroad, somewhere round about 11 p.m., and you just tighten your belt and wait patiently.

It is the National Fête Day of the Mauretanian Republic and you are invited for 10 p.m. In the reception room your host and hostess greet you, and round them gradually gather the representatives of almost every known nationality in the world. Germans and French, English and American visitors, Italians, Poles, Latvians, Esthonians, Lithuanians, Czecho-Slovaks, Turks, Hungarians, Austrians,

Chinese, Japanese, Mongolians, Tartars and specimens of every tribe in Asia. The Russians are represented by certain Commissars and those officials whose duties permit them to mingle socially with foreigners. You go round shaking hands with everyone in turn. You dissolve into little groups, and discuss the latest rumours ; some one pulls you by the arm to a remote corner to tell you " that the fall of the government is imminent," another drags you aside and whispers in your ear : " Have you heard that Stalin and Voroschilov have had a terrible row, and that Stalin was seen with a black eye ? " ; another tells you of the latest arrests, another of the certainty of famine ; another, of an expected mutiny in the army, another whispers : " I have just heard the Leningrad garrison is marching on Moscow." A Commissar says to you : " Do you think Mr. Hoover has decided to recognize the Soviet Government as is reported ? " As everyone is trying to find a quiet spot out of earshot of everyone else, the corners become overcrowded, while the centres of the rooms are empty. Therefore it is usually safer to talk in the centre. An hour passes like this, varied by music and singing. But everyone seems nervous, restless and unable to settle down ; there is a forced atmosphere, and all eyes are fixed on two closed doors. As the hour of 11 approaches, Commissars and guests edge towards the doors and there is a general manœuvring to get into the front line. The scene resembles the start of a race to peg claims in a gold rush. Suddenly the doors are flung open and a glorious vision greets the eye —a long table covered with the good things of life : hams, chickens, venison, cold meats galore, salmon, caviar, fruit, cakes, salads, asparagus. Every country in Europe seems

to have contributed of its best. Stacked round the viands are countless bottles of wine, varieties from the Crimea, real port, Madeira, Bordeaux from France, whisky from Scotland, Rhine wines from Germany and, on the sideboard, you espy special glasses, and you realize that champagne from France will be served later. Then comes the gold rush; there is no further talk; there are no further rumours; there is no more edging away from spies and Commissars. It is now a stampede for the best places. Everyone is for himself; you must fight for position with twenty different nationalities. The Revolution is forgotten; politics are eschewed. It is the sacred feeding hour of all European and Asiatic tribes in a land no longer overflowing with milk and honey. It is amazing how some of the Russians can eat. They have probably not tasted food that day, but have starved on glasses of tea. I have watched certain officials start supper, then I have gone out, played three rubbers of bridge, danced four dances, and then returned to the supper-room. I have found them just where I left them, still eating with the same voracious appetite. Wine flows freely, countless glasses of vodka are consumed; the champagne is passed round and you drink your hostess's health. The atmosphere has completely changed. "Bloodthirsty" Commissars have now become charming social companions; spies become confidants; old Europe's aristocrats jazz with young Bolshevists. Wars, rumours of wars, are forgotten; old hates are put aside. Rubbers of bridge are indulged in. From now on, the golden gates of the supper-room, that temple of peace and plenty, remain open and "House Full" might be written up over them during the whole evening.

But the Big Nine are working late in the Kremlin. Stalin does not dance and never goes to a party.

I am standing in the resplendent ballroom of Kharotonenko House, where the Foreign Office entertains. Mon. F., the Chef de Protocol, and some of his younger colleagues are giving a dance to the younger members of the Corps Diplomatique. The attachés and daughters of the Embassies and Legations have been invited, but none of the ambassadors and ministers. It is quite an informal affair. The only other ladies present are the wives of some of the Commissars, and the leading ladies of the Ballet. It is a strange social mix-up, which you could only find in Russia, this *mélange* of the *jeunes filles* of the Embassies and the *ballerine*. All are beautifully dressed in the latest creations, and some even wear jewels. The men are all in tail coats, for dinner-jackets have been abandoned for the evening. I imagine myself back in Paris or London once again. It is the smartest party I have seen in Moscow. The *jeunes filles* and the *ballerine* divide into two camps and gaze at one another with curiosity. There is some little shyness on both sides at the beginning, but this disappears as the party warms up. The *ballerine* are charming and graceful, veritable *grandes dames du monde*. We dance until supper is announced. There is no rush or crowding as the party is small and there is room for all. The food and drinks provided by the government are excellent, and everyone is contented and gay. At 4 a.m. the ladies commence to slip away. Our host does not like to break up at this early hour, and invites a few friends including myself to play a few rubbers of bridge. We adjourn to his private suite of rooms, and play contract until 11.30 a.m. on the following

day. Some one then suggests it is time to go home. We sally forth into the bitter cold in our evening clothes, through deep snow, and wander back to the hotel. Everyone in the streets seems half frozen ; long queues are waiting outside the provision shops, and the eager crowds of beggars are at hand to tap your bridge winnings at source. I return with a shock to the world of realities, after imagining I have spent the last twelve hours in old pre-revolutionary Russia.

It is Sunday morning and I have a rendezvous with a lady to visit what had been described to me as " the most amazing sight in Moscow." This is the great open-air sale of private goods and chattels in the Smolenski street, which is allowed by the government to be held every Sunday. It is a concession to private individuals who are so utterly broke that they cannot raise money by any other means. When I arrived on the scene I could hardly believe the evidence of my own eyes. Imagine a bitterly cold day with the thermometer registering twenty to thirty degrees of frost, and the ground covered with snow. The trams pass through the centre of the street, and with tingling bells drive great lanes through this immense crowd. Furniture and household goods stretching for miles are piled up on both sides of the road, leaving the pavements clear for prospective purchasers. Outside this mass of junk stand men, women and young girls of all ages, mostly belonging to the upper and middle classes to judge by their looks and general demeanour. Here they stand or squat shivering in the snow for hour after hour in the hope of selling the few remaining articles left in their homes in order to raise a few roubles for the purchase of food. Many are blue in

the face, paralysed with hunger and cold, and all have a dumb, expressionless, resigned look, as if all hope had long since departed from their souls.

You imagine the houses have suddenly crumbled, and sunk into mother earth, leaving only the furniture and household goods above ground. You could furnish your home with second-hand articles by just moving along this line of frozen survivors of the old brigade. Double beds, single beds, pianos, wardrobes, wash-hand-stands, pots without handles, lie in the snow side by side with hundreds of sacred Ikons, and piles of old blankets and worn-out sheets. Old tin tubs, knives, forks, plates, glasses, and dishes lie jumbled together. There are old clothes of all shapes and sizes, pokers and shovels, musical instruments, family portraits, paintings, photographs, odd toilet requisites, looking-glasses, electric fittings, boxes of nails, worn-out shaving brushes, second-hand tooth-brushes, toothless combs, and half-used cakes of soap. There are a number of odd boots and shoes, because many Russians only have one, and are looking for another to match it. The purchaser walks down the line with his solitary boot or shoe until he finds a suitable mate for it. Such a jumble of motley worthless junk, the last hope of thousands, the world has surely never seen before.

But what an appalling tragedy lies behind this awful scene! I hasten away, for the spectacle leaves a morbid impression on the mind. You can imagine the return of most of these wretches with the odd shoe, the old hair brush, or the family portrait unsold, to a comfortless room now almost stripped bare, with no heating, and with no money with which to buy food. Then my thoughts return

to my last evening in Kharotonenko House, amidst the beautiful *ballerine*. I glance back once more at the frozen, starving old brigade. Many of them must have formerly danced in that house, or attended brilliant receptions there. Some are perhaps selling bits of the costume they wore at the last ball. I seem to hear the voice of Madame Roland on the scaffold: "Oh Liberty, Liberty, what crimes are committed in thy name!"

I am invited by Madame M. of the X Theatre to join a few friends at supper in her flat. "You must only expect discomfort," says my hostess; "you know the miserable manner in which we Russians are compelled to live." I had been told that it is usual to contribute something on these occasions, so I purchased several magnums of Bordeaux and some caviar. I made my way to her address in a miserable droshky at 11.30 p.m. But on my arrival I found it to be an enormous apartment-house, with several hundred different flats, and I did not know her number. No one seemed to be about at this hour except the concierge, who could not understand a word when I endeavoured to pronounce my hostess's name. I decided to try a flat at random, rang the bell, and waited. Soon I heard whispering, then the door opened about six inches, and the pale face of a woman looked nervously at me. I saw I had made a mistake, raised my hat and left. I then tried another apartment. The door opened about three inches and a woman with a look of terror in her eyes gazed at me. I raised my hat and left. I knocked at another and after a long silence an elderly man opened the door about two inches. I saw I had made another mistake. Then I realized I was terri-

fying these unfortunates by knocking and ringing at this late hour, as the only guests they expect are the agents of the G.P.U. The noise of the opening of doors now brought several people outside on the landing, and I found a man, who looked in the last stages of consumption, who spoke a little French, and I explained my dilemma. Fortunately, he knew the flat for which I was looking. I climbed some flights of dirty stairs and knocked. The door opened the usual six inches and my hostess looked out. She ushered me in and immediately closed it again.

I found myself in a narrow passage leading to a tiny kitchen ; the floor was covered with coats, hats and goloshes. I was ushered into a tiny room; four paces stretched its length and two its width. Inside ten guests were assembled. A divan, two chairs, and a dressing-table were the only furniture. Only half the party could sit at a time. I was introduced to all in turn. There were three young girls, one a dancer, one an actress and all very pretty. They wore a mixture between evening and day dress, and had obviously done their utmost to make themselves smart. All wore artificial silk stockings. A huge ladder had appeared in the calf of the stocking of the dancer. She was almost in tears. " I only bought them to-day and they cost nine roubles ! " she exclaimed. Her friends gathered round and expressed their sympathy, just as if she had lost a dear relative or friend. Silk stockings are more valuable than human life in Russia.

There were three other more elderly ladies. Each had known the glory and luxury of pre-revolutionary days. Each had done her best to hang round her all that was left of her ancient finery.

The rest of the party were men. One a singer, another an actor, the third the husband of my hostess, who had just returned from a shooting expedition, and had brought back thirty-two duck—valuable loot for the larder in Russia. The fourth was a Japanese living in Moscow, who had brought a gramophone.

Suddenly there came a loud knock at the door. The effect was strange. All the women sprang a foot into the air, and then tried to conceal their nervousness by laughter. The men glanced at one another anxiously. Our hostess went to the door and opened it the customary six inches.

"Come in," she said.

Two more ladies arrived, quite smartly dressed ; one was a *ballerina* and the other a friend.

At each knock heralding a new arrival, everyone sprang into the air, and I found myself following suit. This movement has become automatic in Russia, and you get into the habit of never opening a door more than six inches. It still remains with me, and I cannot break myself of the habit.

The gramophone is started, and we begin to dance. There are now twenty-one people in a room possibly thirteen feet long and six wide. Dancing is difficult. Not more than three couples can stand upright at once. The rest retire to the passage or curl themselves up on the divan, and the couples dance in turn.

Suddenly our hostess announces supper : we pass into the only other room, which is slightly larger than the one we have left because it is square. There is a round table in the centre, a smaller table near the window, and two divans. Round the table are places for ten persons, which are filled

by the ladies; the rest of the party recline cross-legged on the two divans. The table is covered with different gifts brought by different guests. There are my magnums of Bordeaux, many decanters of vodka, bottles of Russian wine, plates of fish salad, caviar, coarse bread, butter, and other delicacies. Everyone has made some sacrifice of income. All help themselves to a glass of vodka and drink to the health of our host. Then the talking really begins. The sight of food puts everyone into good humour. Most of the party have tasted nothing all that day. Each person takes something out of each dish and piles it up on his plate. All eat ravenously, and drink in gulps.

Suddenly there is a thundering knock at the outer door. All the ten at the table, and all on the divans spring a yard into the air. Several women turn pale. Our indomitable hostess hurries to open the door the usual six inches. A figure in military uniform enters.

"It's all up now!" I murmur to myself. "This time they're for it. I wonder if they will take me, too!"

The man is very handsome, with fine features and black curly hair. He doffs his grey coat and displays a dark blue coat jacket, black trousers and field boots. He carries an automatic pistol, a map case, and wears a Sam Browne belt and the customary military cap.

But on entering, instead of arresting the party, he flings his pistol, his map case and his Sam Browne belt on the divan and proceeds to embrace our hostess and several other ladies. I am introduced and am greeted with a most agreeable smile.

"This is the most pleasant man I have ever met," I

think, "and certainly the best-looking. No wonder the ladies all kiss him."

Then suddenly to my amazment I discover I am not talking to a man but to a woman. My hostess explains: "This is Madame X. Six years ago she joined the aviation corps and has now risen to the rank of lieutenant. She is the only lady aviator in the Russian Army."

I gaze on her in amazement. She takes the hands of all the guests in turn, to show her powerful grip. Madame X is unique, and speaks French perfectly. She always wears uniform and possesses no female attire. She lives in barracks with the other officers of her "Flight" and is treated just like a man, and she is said to be one of the best aviators in Russia. She regards life entirely from a man's standpoint and declares she loves nothing in life except her aeroplane. The army is very proud of her and for some reason has allowed her to remain in the Service.

The party now warms up. The old cook enters carrying an enormous round of hot veal. This is the *plat de résistance*.

Our hostess carves it up; everyone is served, sitting and eating where a square inch of space can be found. Now the wine is uncorked; glass after glass is consumed, and the talk becomes general. Not a word of politics, of bad times, or of the G.P.U. Everyone is trying to imagine they have returned to a world they know no longer. The fumes of the wine soon bring this old world into being. Practical jokes, songs, peals of laughter, resound through the still night air. The steam heat, the smell of cooking, and the smoke of countless cigarettes have made the atmosphere of this tiny room like that of a Chinese opium den, but no one cares.

Our hostess suddenly takes down an enormous old-fashioned powder horn from a nail on the wall. Into this she pours Bordeaux, white wine, and vodka until it is filled to the brim. Then she sings a song to each person in turn, which is taken up by all present. Everyone drinks out of this improvised loving-cup.

Suddenly our attention is drawn to the Japanese, who is sitting on the edge of the divan, with tears pouring down his cheeks. I have never seen a Japanese weep before; I did not even known they could weep. It is a strange sight. There are no independent tears following one another at fairly decent intervals, but a long unbroken stream of water which rolls down his shirt front on to the floor. Several ladies hasten to comfort him. My hostess explains. For two years he has deeply loved a Russian lady, who was a frequent visitor at this flat. Now she has married and left Moscow, but he cannot forget her. Vodka is handed to him and he swallows about a dozen glasses without turning a hair or changing his melancholy expression. Then the flow of tears ceases and he sits silently by himself.

After supper some one starts playing the piano, and an elderly lady sings some old Russian folk-songs charmingly. A tenor from the Opera then entertains us, and afterwards a lady recites. There seems to be unlimited talent. The whole party are now curled up in a solid mass on the two divans, listening to the music. The space is so limited and all are so squeezed together that it is impossible to say to what bodies the various heads, arms and legs belong, but all have supped and drunk well and are feeling warm and comfortable, so no one cares about these trifles.

Our hostess suggests removing the table into the passage

to allow us to dance. With difficulty this feat is accomplished, but all communication is now cut with the kitchen. The electric lamp hanging from the centre of the room has to be hooked up by a nail to the side of the wall, as the ceiling is so low.

Once again the wine is passed round and dancing recommences. All are gay and happy. I glance at my watch. It is nearly 4 a.m. I go to my hostess to say good-bye. There are loud protests at my leaving so early, but I claim as my excuse engagements on the following morning.

All get up and drink a farewell glass with me. With great difficulty I retrieve my coat and hat from under the mass of wraps and furniture piled in the tiny hall, but I abandon my goloshes, and sally forth into the cold night air. I have to walk the whole way back through the snow, as there are no isvoschicks. Suddenly I hear a roar, see a bright light and a car dashes by at break-neck speed. It is like a postal van, but is one of the Black Crows or G.P.U. vans, hurrying with its night haul of victims to headquarters.

I have tried to give a picture of what a party is like in poverty-stricken Russia. A brave attempt is still made from time to time to infuse a little gaiety into a drab, colourless existence.

I met my hostess a few days later. She told me they kept up the singing and dancing until past 6 a.m. and that afterwards many of the party decided to stay and sleep on the floor and divans, having no means of regaining their own rooms at that hour.

What is the effect of so much misery on the morals of women in Russia ?

A great deal has been written about the gross immorality which exists in Russia to-day, and the small value which is now attached to the marriage tie. During the past eleven years an enormous number of marriages have been dissolved, and hundreds of thousands of children, both legitimate and illegitimate, have been abandoned by their parents, to run wild, or have been adopted by the State. Formerly, as I have already explained, these waifs and strays formed themselves into bands and hunted through the big cities like packs of wolves. The affair became such a scandal that the government was obliged to make a clean sweep of Moscow and Leningrad and to distribute these young human tigers in the country villages and in the smaller towns.

Marriage and divorce have been made very easy, in fact they often take place in the same office, and you can watch a queue winding its way up to one table for a marriage licence ; and those in a second slowly advancing to obtain a divorce certificate. But this facility led to too many temporary unions based on lust rather than a desire for life-long companionship. A new law has now been passed which makes a man liable to a charge of rape if he divorces a woman within three months of marriage. It cannot be said that this period of matrimonial responsibility is excessive. When one reads of a man having half a dozen mistresses in Russia, and generally leading a loose and lascivious life, you can be fairly sure the writer is romancing.

The Revolution broke up the majority of the homes of the upper classes and bourgeoisie; the effect was less marked in the villages. A couple who had found it possible to live happily in the Tsarist days on a fixed income or salary

often discovered it utterly impossible to continue the struggle for a bare existence together. Faced with misery and starvation very different traits of character assert themselves to those that are apparent, on the surface, in days of prosperity. Thus, thousands who would have continued a normal existence together were brought to the parting of the ways. The man frequently found it impossible to support his wife, and the woman was placed in the dilemma of facing starvation, or of allying herself to the first man able to provide for her. Thousands of young married women and girls were driven to accept any proposals, without bothering about the marriage service—which in this stupendous upheaval lost all its significance—if only they could find some one to help to keep the wolf from the door. All the laws built up by Church and State throughout the ages for the regulation of relations between the sexes collapsed at the Revolution, when all Russians were faced with misery and starvation. Life became a dog fight with death; the cravings of the empty stomach eliminated the natural instincts of the heart; husbands abandoned wives, and mothers their children, without a qualm of conscience.

Thus the vast majority of marriages in Russia to-day are based on utility, rather than on sexual desire or deep-seated love. A man seeks a companion who can aid him in this constant struggle, and one, if possible, who can earn some money to throw into the common fund. It is, I believe, very rare to find a Russian who is keeping a wife and a mistress. There are hardly any whose income could possibly stand the financial strain involved. But there are thousands who see no advantage in marriage. In the

chaotic state into which society has fallen, when all the moral and social laws have been torn to shreds, when thousands of homes have been broken up, the young, pretty but useless woman is at a discount, unless she speedily adapts herself to the new conditions. If a man is compelled to support a woman under difficulties such as exist in Russia, he will seek a good housekeeper rather than an ornamental, voluptuous, extravagant mistress or wife. There is no place for the luxury woman in the Bolshevist economic sphere. Unless a woman, however young and beautiful, can help a man to keep his home together, and if possible earn something for herself, her looks will soon pall, and the husband or lover will surely get rid of her and take a substitute, whom he imagines is better suited to the peculiar economic disabilities of the times.

Voluntary immorality is the perquisite of the wealthy, not of the poverty-stricken. There is no opportunity for the satisfaction of an exaggerated sensuality in Russia, except on a very low scale. The pleasing environment, money, fine wines, choice viands, idle hours, delicious perfumes—all are lacking. There are no professional courtesans in the true sense of the term, because there is no class who can afford to support them. No woman in Russia sells herself voluntarily for money or jewels, because they are not to be found, but a great number of women of all classes are to be found on the streets because they have no other means of keeping body and soul together. Their price has fallen to a crust of bread. A woman living by herself in some filthy single room, without an occupation, is faced by an irresistible temptation to earn, not money, but perhaps a meal, in the only way left open to her.

This hardly constitutes immorality in the accepted sense of the term, because it is not done at the free-will of the woman, to obtain jewels or luxuries, but simply to keep herself alive.

If a rich man went to Moscow, he would have little difficulty in getting hold of a thousand women should he so desire, because the temptation is great, and remains as the only alternative to starvation to thousands, who have abandoned all hope of ever leading a normal existence again.

It is difficult to make the reader understand the true conditions under which women live in Russia. They are denied everything which their sex most desires. Money, jewels, home comforts, fine clothes, light, heat, good food, and cleanliness. The majority are clad in rags, live under most filthy conditions, and have not a penny to spend even on the bare necessities of life. The only class who are slightly favoured, and who can still turn out on occasions in presentable clothes, are some of the actresses, and the *ballerine*. Yet God knows their lives are no bed of roses. They earn more money than any other class in the country, and some of them may obtain a little assistance from Commissars, and those Nepmen whose secret sources of wealth have not yet been discovered by the G.U.P. spies. But there is not one of them who would not willingly leave Russia, if she could obtain a passport.

When you read of wealthy Commissars and their many mistresses and motor-cars, you can discount these as fairy tales. The Commissars have no money except their official salaries of 250 roubles per month, and their cars are the property of the state. Were a Commissar to be found by

the secret police frequenting restaurants and continually entertaining his *innamorate*, or going for joy rides with them in the State motor-cars, he would find himself divested of office, and on his way to Siberia, in a very few hours. Any Russian is in the same position. Illicit love must be carefully concealed, and women cannot be seen in the streets wearing fine clothes and jewels, or dining in expensive restaurants. They would at once be called upon to explain their sources of wealth.

It is bad enough for the younger generation of women, who have never known any other life. It is worse for those who have enjoyed better days, because they compare the state of primitive barbarism into which they have fallen with the life they have known in the past. Great houses have shrunk to single rooms, baths are unknown; kitchens and lavatories are shared on a communal basis with a dozen other families, who belong to a lower social status. Wardrobes, formerly full of fine clothes and warm furs, now contain one or two aged, patched and repatched costumes, in which the owner is ashamed to appear in the streets. Shoes are full of holes, stockings are darned and redarned. All household work must now be done unaided, for the hire of menials is forbidden. From whence will come the next loaf of bread, or scrap of meat or rotting vegetables is the sole problem which occupies the minds of millions of women. To obtain anything, a woman must wait for hours in a queue in deep snow in winter time. Every luxury, however humble, and many of the bare necessities of life, have disappeared from the lives of the Russian women. It is marvellous how they can continue to live under such conditions; yet they face their grey

miserable lives with wonderful courage and philosophy. Yet no wonder thousands shudder at the idea of bringing a child into the world under such conditions, and a birth in the family is now generally regarded as a crowning misfortune, as it means another mouth to feed, and another body to clothe.

Social life, on which so many women are dependent, has entirely disappeared. No one has sufficient room in which to entertain their friends, or sufficient money. The only attempt at hospitality consists of a cup of tea to a visitor, who may happen to drop in. All other entertainments are done on a communal basis, i.e., if friends want to eat together, each brings his own contribution to the common stock, such as I have attempted to describe. The theatres, music halls, and Opera still remain packed, but they are rarely visited by the survivors of the old aristocracy and bourgeoisie. It is the industrial workers and Nepmen, the former with special privileges, and passes, and the latter with some secret horde, who make up the majority of the audiences. The survivors of the old régime keep to themsleves; they do not wish to be seen and to be hunted like criminals from their wretched homes, or to rub shoulders in public with their oppressors.

CHAPTER XVI

THE KREMLIN. LENINGRAD

THE Kremlin dominates Moscow, and, apart from its architectural splendour and historic traditions, there is little of interest to see in the city. In the Tsars' time it was open to the public, but now it is closed; the people complain of the change and ask why. The reason is this. The Kremlin has now become the citadel of the Communist Party. There is not a soul inside it who is not a sworn Communist; and not even a rat could break through the ring of Red Guards. All the girls employed inside as secretaries, typists, or in menial capacities wear red hats to show their political faith. It is the natural desire of every visitor to enter the Kremlin but this is not easily arranged, for the Big Nine, who live and work inside it, do not encourage intruders. I waited three weeks before I could obtain the necessary permission and I was then handed a card to enable me to attend the All Union Congress of Soviet Delegates which was in session. This lasted for over a week, so every day I was able to explore the interior of the Bolshevist stronghold, which is packed with objects of historic interest. Strange to say, once you have passed the triple line of guards and sentinels at the gates, no one inside interferes with you and you can go anywhere you like. I am not sure you could not enter Stalin's private apartments if you knew where to find them. I only once put a foot wrong

and then a curious incident happened. I came across a number of field guns and machine guns parked in the open and proceeded to examine them, thinking they were obsolete and kept as souvenirs.

Suddenly I heard shouts from a sentinel's box and a cavalryman came rushing up on foot carrying a huge sabre, indicating clearly that I was trespassing. I had my interpreter with me and told her to explain, and to apologize. I added, "At the same time you might ask him where is the balcony on which Napoleon is said to have stood to watch the burning of Moscow." The soldier drew himself up to attention, and with great dignity replied, "A Soviet sentinel is not allowed to give away military information." Well, that settled it. As a matter of fact the balcony no longer exists.

There is a wonderful collection of old smooth-bore cannon and howitzers including the gigantic piece known as The Tsar's Gun and also the great bell which was hung for a day on the tower of St. Ivan and then fell, and which has lain ever since on the ground with a piece chipped out of it. Its interior is large enough to house a whole Russian family.

Then, piled up against the wall of the artillery barracks are the whole of the captured cannon and field howitzers of Napoleon's Grand Army. He had twelve hundred pieces when he crossed the Niemen and lost the whole lot during the retreat. They were retrieved, some as far away as the Beresina, and brought to the Kremlin. The military history of the last kings of France, of the Revolution, and of the Empire up to 1812 is scratched or emblazoned on these cannon. All bear different dates and different in-

scriptions engraved or carved on the guns. "Vive le Roi!" "A bas les aristocrats." "Vive la revolution." "Liberté, égalité, fraternité." As time passes the old inscriptions have a line put through them, and new ones take their place so that at the end only "Vive Bonaparte," "Vive Napoleon," "Vive l'Empereur" remain. These old cannon have thundered away all over Europe and Egypt at the Corsican's command. They have known Marengo, Austerlitz, Jena, Eylau, Friedland, Wagram, Spain and Borodino, and then came the end. Not a single cannon which crossed the Niemen in July, 1812, ever saw its native land again. They lie silent witnesses of an enterprise, the most ambitious in history, which, had it succeeded, might have changed the whole history of Russia.

In the Ouspensky Church the Tsars were crowned; in another church close by stand the sarcophagi of many of the Tsars prior to Peter the Great. The churches are all closed, but are opened at the special request of visitors. The Communists have denied God and devote no further sums to the heating and lighting of His temples. They are, therefore, the embodiment of cold and melancholy. The stone coffins of the Tsars, all exactly alike, and packed side by side above ground, resemble abandoned trunks in a lost-property office. They look as if no one would claim them either in this world or in the next. The Bolshevists have stripped the silver off the ikons, claiming that they spoil the effect of the beautiful paintings underneath. Formerly only the heads of Christ, the Virgin, or of the Saints appeared through the outer silver covering. I am inclined to agree that the artistic effect is improved, but there are some unkind enough to say the silver was taken

and melted down for material purposes. I cannot see how it was worth the while as the net value must be small.

The armoury of the Kremlin contains a mass of objects of great value, and historic interest. Here let me do justice to the Soviet Government for their meticulous care of all *objets d'art*. Professors belonging to the old régime are in charge of each department and the process of cataloguing and mounting is still going on. Each room is carefully guarded by old female attendants who sit in chairs with their heads sunk in their hands, apparently asleep, but if you approach too closely a picture, or a vase, or a silver cup, they are all attention and their eyes follow you like a tiger's in the jungle.

In the early days of the Revolution there were many thefts, now the proletars are not shown portable treasures. Inside the armoury is a unique collection of old arms and battle relics ; a room full of the costumes of bygone periods, weird and wonderful dresses of emperors, empresses, princes, nobles, statesmen, and soldiers. There is one of the finest collections of silver, and gold plate in the world, including two magnificent gold vases presented by Queen Elizabeth to Boris Godonov. There are a few antiques of the fourth and fifth centuries, but most of these are in the Hermitage Museum in Leningrad. There is a room containing the finest collection of old coaches, carriages, and sleighs I have ever seen, including the monster sleigh drawn by thirty horses which conveyed the little, then almost unknown " Fyke " of Zerbst (Catherine the Great) from Moscow to Leningrad for her marriage with the Tsar. There is also a whole collection of her dresses,

from girlhood to old age, showing how her figure gradually developed until it reached those monstrous dimensions which terrified her contemporaries, and made her later lovers demand ever increasing salaries as some compensation for holding their onerous position. Most remarkable of all is a solitary pair of enormous boots which looked as if they had been made for some giant who was expected, but never visited this earth. They are Peter the Great's, made by himself, and no one has ever yet been found big enough to fill them. What Russia needs to-day is a dictator who would step right into those boots, strut out into the Red Square, then start to clear away the heaps of rubbish created by the Revolution and begin to build again. You are shown round the armoury by lady guides who have been so carefully trained that they can give a detailed explanation of every object however insignificant. These guides are in turn spied upon by others, just to see they do not become too friendly with strangers, or make any favourable references to ancient times.

Inside the Big Palace overlooking the Moskowa are held the meetings of the All Union Congress of Soviets, which is supposed on paper to hold supreme legislative and executive power. These delegates have, in turn, been elected and sent to Moscow by various local Soviets. In reality they arrive in Moscow from the extreme boundaries of Russia and Asia like a pack of lost sheep, and are carefully shepherded by the government. They are housed and fed free during their stay and can have quite a good time as long as they vote as they are told, and don't attempt to ask stupid questions. In the Big Palace are two immense Halls, the St. Andrew's and the St. George's. The former

has been fitted up as the Chamber, with chairs and desks, and a raised platform at the end. The delegates look very out of place amidst its magnificent decorations of silver and gold. The meetings are well stage-managed; every delegate has his own desk, and the order papers are placed on them, but as few can read they are of little use. They arrive clad in all species of garments, the majority in the costume of humble peasants; there are Tartars, Mongols, Chinese, Caucasaus, and representatives of tribes from all over Asia wearing their national dress, which adds to the picturesqueness of the scene. The Big Nine and the Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarcom) occupy the raised platform, and for about seven hours a day a tremendous stream of oratory is poured into the ear of the delegates, who speedily become very bored, and hopelessly fuddled. The result is, that except when there is a speaker of particular renown, the majority of the desks are unoccupied. Each speaker descends from the platform and mounts a rostrum beneath it, where he talks into a loud speaker, and his voice is thus carried all over the hall. Various experts are called upon from time to time to explain the policy of his department. Lurking at the back of the platform you will see Stalin, whispering to his colleagues, and occasionally casting a furtive glance at the delegates. The whole assembly is surrounded by the armed Guards of the G.P.U. There is a special box for the Corps Diplomatique, who occasionally attend when one of the Big Nine is due to make an important announcement. When issues are to be voted on the procedure is very simple. The Chairman reads out the motion and then asks—not who is for it, but who is against it, by a show of hands. The

wretched delegates know too much to raise a hand in opposition; but comical situations do arise. Some of the old peasants, being hard of hearing, or half asleep, raise their hands by mistake thinking they are supporting the motion. Immediately the eyes of the whole platform are concentrated on them, and their fellow delegates gaze at them in mingled awe, fear, and astonishment. I saw one old boy who had blundered, literally dive under his desk, and remain there hidden from view until the affirmative motion was put, when he stood up holding both hands to attract the attention of all to his repentance. Even the Commissars on the platform laughed.

The St. George's Hall is used as an anteroom for the delegates. Here they can rest, discuss matters, and even write if they are able to do so. Leading from the St. George's Hall is another hall, which is used as a restaurant. Twice a day the government feeds the whole of the delegates free of charge. They sit at long tables and are served with excellent food by pure Communist girls each wearing a regulation red cap. When the government has had enough of these meetings, which are apt to drag on interminably, all it has to do is to close the restaurant, and then the delegates are very pleased to return to their homes. The whole affair is a magnificent piece of stage-management to make the delegates believe they really have a say in the councils of their country. In reality they have none.

The *train de luxe* conveys you from Moscow to Leningrad in comfort. You leave at 11 a.m. and arrive at 9 a.m. I had never visited the old capital before, but I had heard it described so often and seen so many pictures and photographs of it, that I seemed to have known it all

my life. The city gives you the impression of having recently been excavated after being buried for centuries by an earthquake or volcanic eruption. The houses, palaces, churches and monuments are all there, but they look shabby and neglected, and it seems incredible that they could have fallen into such a state of decay from natural causes in so short a space of time. Yet all who knew Leningrad four years ago tell me it is vastly more alive to-day, although the façades of the houses are crumbling day by day. At one period of the Revolution the population had fallen to below six hundred thousand, many buildings were deserted, and grass grew in the streets. But now the old population, or a new one, is steadily returning, following the inevitable laws of supply and demand, and the Local Commissar told me there are once again over a million and a half inhabitants. Leningrad is still the chief industrial centre of Russia and the efforts of the government to re-establish industries have brought back the workers. Many of the bourgeoisie class who fled in the early days have also returned.

Leningrad is a regal city and makes Moscow appear a mere country market town. On both sides of the Neva the magnificent buildings rise, imperial palaces, homes of Grand Dukes, Museums, Fortresses, and Universities; but the great river now flows between its gilded banks deserted and unvexed by steamers. I never saw a single ship or even a boat put out from either shore. Leningrad does not appear to have ever formed an integral part of Russia. It looks exactly what it was, the home of the privileged class dumped on the boundaries of Asia. Everything about it is imperial and brings back memories of the Tsars. The grandeur remains, but the gilt has gone, and only the

ghosts of the past seem to flicker through the streets and palaces. The population appears much the same as in Moscow, but I thought there were more better dressed persons in the main thoroughfares. The authorities are trying to clear the main buildings, and force the industrial workers into the suburbs, where some new model dwellings have been erected. The statues of the Tsars remain, and also the Imperial Double Eagles on the palaces. The G.P.U. controls Leningrad just as it does Moscow and is said to be even more tyrannical.

The Hermitage Picture Gallery and Museum is the pride of the city. This immense collection, started by Catherine the Great, has swollen to almost unmanageable dimensions since the Revolution. The whole of the private galleries were confiscated and added to the collection already in the Hermitage. In that building alone are thousands of pictures which it would take weeks to study carefully. Unfortunately, there is little light in winter time, and as there is no artificial lighting, many masterpieces can hardly be seen. In one room are thirty-seven Rembrandts. The Winter Palace has now been turned into part of the Museum ; the two buildings are connected by a drawbridge above a side-street, and the work of sorting out the gold from the ore, and hanging those pictures worth showing, proceeds steadily, but a great deal yet remains to be done. Visitors should choose the summer months for seeing this marvellous ensemble of pictures, tapestries, china, armour and arms. For the moment the most meticulous care is being taken of these *objets d'art*, but who would care to say what might happen if another revolution suddenly broke out !

As a special privilege I was allowed to visit the vaults in

which are stored the unique collections of gold ornaments which have been dug up from the tombs of the Greek colonists in Southern Russia. They date back to the Fifth Century B.C. The contents of each tomb are shown under separate glass cases, and you can trace the gradual decline of Greek art from the Fifth Century B.C. to the Second Century A.D. I have never seen such a collection. The workmanship is so exquisite and so delicate that no modern jeweller has been able to reproduce it. There are superb crowns of kings and queens, marvellous head-dresses, collars, brooches, vases and ornaments. Gradually the gold seems to have become scarcer and the crowns, tiaras, and ornaments are studded with semi-precious stones. There is one vase of the Fifth Century B.C. which in shape resembles a large flagon for wine in the Middle Ages. On its surface are scenes representing everyday incidents in the life of an individual. One engraving shows a Greek of the period having a tooth pulled out by the local dentist. The posture, the suffering depicted, and the instruments employed are exactly the same as you may see in any dentists' to-day. Nothing in the world seems to have changed.

The procedure is very curious. A lady guide conducts you down below, and before the steel doors of this huge vault, you find four armed guards with rifles and fixed bayonets. You then sign your name in a book and the guide signs a receipt for you which is handed over to the guards. If any article is subsequently found missing the guide is held personally responsible. The great doors are then unlocked, and are closed silently behind you and relocked. You now find yourself alone with your guide in a vault brilliantly lit

by electric light, as there are no windows or any other communication with the outside. You start from the Fifth Century B.C. and work toward the Second Century A.D. Each gem is explained to you by your guide who seems to know every object by heart. Suddenly we were interrupted by the ringing of a telephone bell; the great steel door silently opened, and a soldier beckoned my guide outside, closed the door on me and I found myself alone. It gave me a weird feeling to be buried alone in the bowels of the earth with the personal belongings of those who had passed away over two thousand years before. I examined the jewels alone for some ten minutes. A thought occurred to me. How easy it would be to break a little pane of glass and snatch a handful of gems off the crown of some dead Queen. But how could I escape with my booty through those steel doors and past the armed guards? A quarter of an hour passed and I began to grow uneasy. Why had I been suddenly abandoned? Why was I thus locked in? What had happened to my guide? Supposing I had been forgotten! The lights might be turned off and I might remain buried for days, as the gates are seldom opened. I began to long for human companionship. Suddenly I felt I was no longer alone, and turning suddenly, I found an armed guard with his rifle and fixed bayonet almost at my side. He had entered so silently that I had heard nothing. A little later my original guide appeared and apologized for her absence.

In a second vaulted chamber buried in the earth is the whole of Catherine the Great's superb collection of snuff boxes, watches, rings, etc., over three thousand pieces; also the wonderful saddle-cloths and scimitars inlaid with

precious stones presented by the Sultans of Turkey to different Tsars. You are overwhelmed by the richness of these relics of the past. After spending several hours amidst all those glories of dead epochs you are brought back to realities, when you pass into the street again and meet the hordes of beggars on the steps of the Hermitage. The contrast is glaring.

To me the most interesting relic in Leningrad is La Petite Maison de Pierre le Grand, with the little chapel du Sauveur attached. This was the original hut he built for himself out of logs when drawing up his designs for the capital. His furniture remains intact. The hut and chapel have been entirely covered by an outer building, to protect them against the inclemency of the climate and the ravages of time. The Ikon of Christ is much venerated by the inhabitants of Leningrad. When I entered a dozen men and women were kneeling before it and two priests were conducting a service for the dead. I wondered how they had died, whether in war, through natural causes, or at the hands of the executioner. When the service came to an end each kissed the ikon, and then passed out before the priest, kissing a Bible he held in his hand. The worshippers all looked as if they belonged to the old régime.

I then passed on to the gloomy fortress of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, where, in the church, all the Tsars since Peter the Great lie buried. What tragedies have been enacted within its walls—both under the Tsars and under the Bolshevists ! It is so gloomy and so haunted by memories of the past that the Bolshevists have abandoned it as a prison. It is now open to the public, who are shown round by guides. The famous old underground cells where

prisoners formerly lay in slime and were devoured by rats were closed up in 1879, but the existing cells are dark and gloomy enough; each one of them could tell a dozen tragic tales. Naturally, the Communist guides only speak of the horrors under the Tsars. They show you the cell where Lenin's brother, Alexander Ulianov, lay before being taken to be executed in the Schlusselburg Fortress, on March 8, 1887, for the attempted assassination of the Tsar. They show you the grill through which doomed prisoners were allowed to receive the last adieux of their relatives and friends, but they only mention the final interview between Alexander Ulianov and his mother—the others do not count in their minds.

In the courtyards of the fortress hundreds of officers and civilians were butchered in the early days of the Revolution, and from these cells the Grand Dukes were taken and shot as a reprisal for the assassination of a Commissar in front of the Winter Palace. I have never visited a more gloomy or forbidding spot. Amidst all these horrors the old Tsars still repose in their coffins above ground. No one seems inclined to disturb them. While I was in the fortress scores of school children were being shown round by guides, learning from them of the awful tyranny of the Tsars, but hearing nothing of the massacres perpetrated by the Bolshevists.

Communists in Russia are carried to their last resting-place in a red hearse, but no prayers are read over their graves. Those who belong to the Orthodox Church are borne in white hearses and the two cortéges frequently pass *en route*, presenting a strange contrast. If the dead meet on the farther shore and discuss dispassionately the

world they have left, each will stand amazed at the follies committed by both Tsarist and Bolshevist régimes. Each can claim the fortress of Saint Peter and Saint Paul as a common monument to the crimes and imbecilities of his government.

CHAPTER XVII

THE GHOSTS OF TSARSKOE-SELO

THE saddest pilgrimage the visitor can make is that from Leningrad to Tsarskoe-Selo Bourg, the little village of the Tsar, now called Dietskoie Selo Bourg. The train meanders along, stopping at every station, and conveys you there in about half an hour. You gaze from the window of your carriage at the uprooted rails of the Tsar's private line, which the Bolshevists have ruthlessly destroyed, pulling up the rails, and tearing down the embankment. Only a few steel uprights remain of his private station. You pass *en route* the battlefield marking the high water mark of Yudenitch's advance on the capital. You drive from the station in a miserable sleigh over the roads deep in snow and pass through avenues with wooden houses on either side where formerly the officials, and visitors to the Court dwelt during the summer months. They are now the homes of the people, but are crumbling to decay from neglect, and will soon be uninhabitable. You arrive at the gates of the Palais Catharine (Ekaterinski Dvoretz), built by the architect Rastrelli (1740-60), for the Empress Elizabeth I, grand-daughter of Peter the Great. It is an enormous building, three hundred metres long and two stories high, of the Italian School of that period, and resembles the Winter Palace in Leningrad, built by the same artist. It takes you hours to wander through the endless reception rooms, bedrooms, suites

and passages. Every room is gilded and painted, but in different styles, with the exception of the Amber Room presented by Frederick the Great, and a Silver Room, which looks somewhat out of place, built by the Emperor Alexander I. The general effect is one of gaudy, almost barbaric splendour, but the palace could hardly have been comfortable to live in. There is only one bath tucked away, especially installed for a visit of President Loubet. The furniture, pictures, and china are all in place. An army of women are kept employed keeping the palace clean, and you are only allowed to enter after putting sandals over your boots. To wander through these deserted halls, tenanted only by memories of the past, produces an indescribable feeling of depression. You feel that the Emperors and Empresses, the Princes, the Grand Dukes and courtiers have all lived in vain; that all this splendour has been wasted on thin air; that the life of those times was unreal; that the present is equally unreal, and that Russia has never known a normal epoch in her chequered history. Your guide is a true Communist. She explains everything with remarkable knowledge and perspicuity, but without the slightest trace of feeling or enthusiasm. She seems to regard the disasters which have overwhelmed the Romanovs as the natural judgment of Heaven. To her all the great figures of the past who have thronged the Catharine Palace, and passed through these deserted rooms and halls, were so many criminals who have at length met their just deserts.

From this monument to the follies and extravagances of the 18th Century you pass out on to the pure white snow. You pass through the grounds of the Palace, cross the high road and then enter the gates of the Alexander

Palace (Alexandrovski Dvoretz), the last home of the Romanovs, from where Nicholas II and his family departed for Tomsk and Ekaterinburg. It was constructed between 1785 and 1790 by order of Catharine II for her beloved grandson Alexander, afterwards Alexander I, from 1800 to 1825 Emperor of Russia, the son of the mad Emperor Paul who was assassinated, some say, at Alexander's instigation. The architect was Quarenghi. It can hardly be called a palace, it is really a fairly large, white, two-winged English country house standing in a modest and unattractive Park. The house has little seclusion or privacy and is overlooked by all the surrounding dwellings. The entrance to the Park is no more than three hundred yards from the palace. At this time of year, when the ground is covered with snow and a bleak wind howls through the leafless trees, an atmosphere of indescribable melancholy and tragedy hangs over the house and grounds of the Alexander Palace. The Park is deserted except for a few old retainers, survivors of the Imperial régime, who are busy sawing up logs for the winter fires. In the Park are the stumps of many trees which the Tsar himself cut down, when a prisoner, while waiting for the order which was to convey himself and the last of his line on their final journey.

You pass from the main entrance into a small Porter's Lodge where sits the guardian. You show your special permit to visit the Palace, and he summons a guide. A woman of about thirty appears ; her face is hard and lined, her soul seems to have frozen within her, and she has that curious expressionless look which you find in so many Communist women. In the outer hall you don your sandals once again, for the Bolshevists, having wiped out

the Romanov family, are scrupulous in the care they take of their property. You pass through another little hall, in which are a series of busts of the children of Nicholas I, and then you enter the main series of reception rooms. At one end is a miniature chapel where the Empress was wont to pray. On the walls are hung portraits of dead Tsars and Tsarinas and of Princes of the royal blood and their wives. Catharine the Great gazes down reproachfully, and with an air of mingled disdain and derision. There is a small replica of the picture of Queen Victoria as she appeared upon "Taking the oath of allegiance to maintain the Protestant Faith." The rooms open into one another; at each entrance stand models of footmen with bowed heads, in the scarlet and gold liveries with white breeches, as worn by the household of the Tsar. Their faces are merely a shapeless mass of wax which gives them the horrible appearance of a corpse decaying after death, for it is not permitted to depict the face of a lackey under the present régime. They stand there, relics of the past and mocking at the present, as if inviting you to enter, and see the work of the Bolshevists. The centre room has a large circular window with glass doors giving on the Park. Through these windows a straight path takes you to the end of the Park close to the main entrance. Round the walls are hung life-size portraits of the Tsars. You pause. Then the soulless, monotonous voice of your guide is heard: —"Through that window Catharine II passed, carrying the young prince, afterwards Alexander I, when making him a present of the palace, in the year 1790." You are silent for a moment of historic reflection; then your guide drones out—"Through that window the Imperial family

passed at dawn, on July 31, 1917, on their way to Tomsk." You expect, "and to Ekaterinburg," to follow, but the words are not uttered. The imperial calvary always stops at Tomsk, when it is mentioned by the Bolshevists. Maybe the rest of the story is distasteful. Then she adds, without the smallest trace of emotion: "In this hall they sat on their baggage at five a.m., awaiting the order to leave."

What an emotional picture rises before the mind's eye! The sudden summons which arrived late the night before, the hasty packing of the baggage; the excitement amongst the children, and then the descent to the hall at this early hour of the Tsar, the Tsarina, the four Grand Duchesses, and of that poor hæmophile, the Tsarevitch, carried by the faithful sailor. The shivering, panic-stricken retainers and the Red Guards with fixed bayonets surround the piles of baggage, packed as if for an excursion to the sea-side. The family talk in whispers amongst themselves; a Grand Duchess reminds her sister of some forgotten treasure upstairs. You can picture the Grand Duchesses running back for the last time to the rooms of their childhood's years, which they will never see again, to snatch a favourite doll, or a cherished snapshot from some half-empty cupboard. Then comes a sharp order. A procession is formed. Headed by the Tsar, the family pass out into the cold morning air through those same windows through which Catharine II bore Alexander I one hundred and twenty-seven years before. The Red Guards close in; at the bottom of the park they pause, and all gaze back for the last time on the house they have loved so well. Not one of the outcasts will ever see it again. The first stage of the Via Crucis has begun.

At the far end of these reception halls is a small room, and through the open door you see what resembles from a distance a number of victims waiting to be conveyed to an *auto-da-fé* in their strange garb of execution. Then you discover they are models—each bedecked in a white cover. Your guide pulls off one of the covers, and a magnificent gold and white court dress is exposed to view. "These," she says, "are the Empress Feodorovna's court dresses; they are all modelled in the same fashion but of different material." One by one you examine these relics of the great days of the Imperial régime.

On one side of this room is what the guide described as "an American glide." It is shaped like a toboggan run and the children were wont to slide from the top down to the floor. Underneath it are two toy motor-cars. The guide explains:—"The Tsarevitch played with them for the last time while waiting to leave, and they have not been taken up to the nursery since." There they stand, abandoned in their improvised garage, for all to see. In another corner of this room is a genuine miniature motor-car which he drove about the grounds.

You want to linger, but your guide hastens you on. You pass through a door and turn to the left into a corridor narrow and ill lit. "We are now about to enter the private apartments of the Emperor and Empress. These on the right belonged to the Tsarina, and those on the left, to the Tsar," the guide explains. We explore the Empress's first.

The door is opened and you find yourself in the Empress's Music Room, where she was wont to entertain her most intimate friends. There are two pianos, side by side,

and the music is lying on them just as it was abandoned. On the table are many books and bric-à-brac. The room looks as if it had been occupied but yesterday. On the left hand wall there hangs an enormous battle picture by Détaille, entitled, "Cavalry Returning from a Charge," a scene from the Franco-German war, which looks out of place in this room. On the wall, facing the windows, is a beautiful portrait of the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, by Kaulbach, painted in 1898. Her robe is white; her beautiful, æsthetic, almost ethereal features, wear a melancholy expression and she is gazing across the room at a portrait, painted by Flameng, of Marie Antoinette, in a red dress and large picture hat, playing with her two children, as if she was meditating on the French Queen's tragic fate. You hasten out. It is too depressing to remain with these tragic figures gazing with curiosity at one another.

You then enter the Empress's private boudoir. The furniture is very plain—a few easy chairs, sofas, and tables—there are no valuable antiques, but just what you would expect to find in a simple person's country house. On the tables are her favourite books, bric-à-brac and innumerable photographs and snapshots. There are dozens of her children taken from babyhood up to the hour they left for Tomsk. Here you can read in pictures the whole story of a happy domestic life and a miserable dynastic existence.

A pleasing painting of the Tsarevitch hangs on the wall, and another of the Tsar when a young man, wearing a plain undress uniform. On the right of the door, as you enter, are some wooden steps leading up to a gallery which

looks very out of place in a boudoir. It has a round table and some chairs.

You appear surprised and your guide hastens to explain. "Up there is a door which leads to a passage across the corridor outside to the Emperor's apartments. He could thus join the Empress in secret without anyone seeing him leave his room. You see the Emperor had no bedroom in his own apartments, and every night he crossed the bridge across the outer corridor and joined the Empress." You leave the Empress's boudoir, feeling that any moment she may return and catch you examining her most cherished possessions.

You pass into a smaller boudoir which she used as a writing-room. It is a mass of snapshots. Every friend and relative must be represented here. On a tiny round table is a photograph, bigger than all the others. It is of the Emperor and Empress and their children all standing in a line. It was the last ever taken of them, the day before their departure for Tomsk. On the Empress's writing-table are a few sheets of note-paper—on one of them is written some memoranda—and the ink, pens and pencils are all there. In this room are two telephones. "One of them," our guide explains, "had direct communication with the Winter Palace at Leningrad; the other direct communication with the Emperor's headquarters when he was at the front."

Then you pass on into the Empress's bedroom. You imagine you have entered a chapel. The walls are hidden by a mass of sacred ikons, carvings of Christ, the Virgin and the saints, crucifixes, and holy pictures. There is not a square inch of space which has not been utilized for some

holy relic. The room is not large. The furniture is all white and very simple, such as you find in children's nurseries. Two very narrow beds stand side by side facing the windows. They are also white and have lace pillow-cases and pink coverlets. The sheets, blankets, pillows, lace, and coverlets remain just as they were left when the Imperial couple received their hasty summons to depart. Only the beds have been remade.

On the left side of the room rests an ordinary washhand stand, such as you see in servants' rooms, with two basins and two jugs. "Surely," I remarked, "the Empress used something better than that?" "No," replied our guide, "she always used this one." On the washhand stand there remains an empty bottle of eau-de-Cologne, left behind on the night of her departure. On a table at the foot of the beds are scattered a number of knick-knacks and the inevitable snapshots. On either side of the beds, built out into the room, still further contracting the space, are two wooden partitions rising to the height of the ceiling. I asked what they were for. The guide replied, "One contains a *prie-Dieu* where the Empress was wont to pray at nights and the other is a basin with running water." What a strange arrangement! The Imperial family certainly lived in the most bourgeois manner. The room seems to have been vacated but yesterday, and you pass on feeling it will be reoccupied this very night.

On leaving the Empress's room you enter a small antechamber, lined with cupboards, which contain the Empress's wardrobe and the many uniforms of the regiments of which she was Colonel, but the light is bad and it is difficult to

examine them. Beyond the antechamber is her maid's room, left intact and containing a small plain iron bedstead. Beyond this there is a small corridor containing further cupboards, full of the Empress's clothes. A stairway descends to the corridor from the children's rooms, which are above.

From the rooms occupied by the Empress you pass out of a door, cross the main corridor, and enter the Emperor's apartments. The first is a small smoking-room, with leather upholstered English arm-chairs and sofas. There are a few hunting trophies, a few books, some stands of arms, and a few paintings. On a small table is a charming portrait of the Tsarevitch in water-colours, and on the wall there hangs a portrait of the Empress taken when she was a young girl. The room has little to distinguish it, and resembles the smoking-room of a modest country squire. There is one object of interest. It is a plain paper calendar standing on a table. It has been torn off up to July 31 (old style), the day on which the Imperial family left for Tomsk.

Beyond is a small study where the Emperor was wont to work. On his desk are pens, ink, and paper, and a few books of reference just as he left them. Alongside is another table at which the Ministers summoned from Leningrad with whom he was engaged in business were wont to sit. In front of the Emperor's desk is a small table and leather chair. Here the Tsarevitch was seated when the Emperor was engaged in business, and took his first lessons in that statecraft which was destined to send him at a tender age, not to the throne, but to Ekaterinburg.

You can picture the scene. The Emperor dictating his

futile orders, and the young boy listening listlessly to endless discussions on the army, the navy, the Duma, and the revolutionary manifestations, and all the time longing to get back to his sisters and his toys. In a case are a collection of the Emperor's favourite snuff-boxes and cigarette-cases. You pass on ; there is little to detain you here. The room is symbolical of the ruin which has overwhelmed Russia. It was here that a good father devoted to his family, weak by nature, but determined to play the petty tyrant, endeavoured to govern a nation of 140 millions.

You pass into the Emperor's bath-room. You climb three steps to a raised platform on which there is a sofa facing a huge fireplace. Behind the sofa is a blue and white porcelain swimming bath, about 14 ft. long, 8 ft. broad, and very deep. The towels are still hanging on the pegs. Beyond is a tiny improvised chapel, and in one corner of it a table at which the Emperor's valet sat. There is also a collection of sticks, mostly malacca canes.

You then enter the Emperor's study. It is a typical English room, with English furniture. The first object which meets the eye is the billiard table, on which are spread the maps used by the Emperor during the war, with the Russian lines marked in red and blue. There are the Emperor's desk and a large round table for his Ministers when they came from Leningrad to hold a Cabinet Council. In this room so many fateful decisions were taken. Your guide remarks, in her cold, hard voice : " It was at this desk that the Emperor dissolved the Duma."

She steps in front of a portrait of the Empress. It is that of an attractive young woman in a country frock, and contained in a very plain black wooden frame, much

knocked about. "This," she says, "was the Emperor's favourite picture of the Empress. He took it with him when they left for Tomsk. Now they have brought it back here." Who knows? This portrait in the battered frame may have gone very much farther than Tomsk. There is no reason why the Emperor should have left it there. He probably gazed upon it for the last time when he descended those fatal steps to the cellar and shambles of Ekaterinburg. A flight of steps leads from the study across the corridor to the Empress's apartments. The tour of the Royal apartments is at an end.

You pass once again into the outer corridor, and at its end mount two flights of stone steps to gain the children's quarters. A door is open on your left and another in front of you. In the latter room are a desk, a student's chair, and a blackboard. Here the Tsarevitch was taught by his different tutors. Through the open door to your right a pathetic sight meets the eye. The room is packed with abandoned dolls.

They were all carefully arranged by the Grand Duchesses before they left, on miniature chairs and sofas, and a fine baby lies back in its cradle, with a merry smile on its face, its staring eyes wide open. Two great dolls, with large lustrous brown eyes and beautiful brown hair, sit on a garden seat with their arms outstretched towards the door. They have an appealing and inquiring look in their eyes. For eleven years they have thus sat waiting for the return of their playmates, and they look as if they had not yet given up all hope. They stare at every newcomer in wonderment, as if searching in vain for the familiar faces of the past.

Then you enter the children's dining-room. The table is laid for six, the five children and a governess. The cups and saucers, the plates, knives and forks are all laid for the breakfast which was never served on that fatal morning of July 31. An empty bottle of claret stands in the centre. But the guests will never come. You pass in succession through the bedrooms of the four Grand Duchesses. All are plainly furnished with simple white furniture, but the beds are missing. "They were taken to Tomsk," says your guide, "and have not been returned." They have been replaced by simple iron ones.

On the dressing-tables there are scattered in all the disorder of a hurried departure a hundred small articles, which there was no time to pack—toilet requisites, gold boxes, jewel cases, scissors, manicure sets, combs and brushes. Innumerable photographs of their brothers and sisters adorn each of the Grand Duchesses' rooms. There is a large room turned into a bath-room and lined with cupboards for the girls' clothes. A large white robe ready for use hangs over a chair by the abandoned bath.

Outside the corridor is lined with huge trunks and hampers partly packed. Each contains an enormous mass of clothes of different periods from earliest childhood up to the Revolution. Apparently it was intended to take some of these trunks to Tomsk, but at the last moment they were left behind.

Then you enter the Tsarevitch's bedroom, which is very small, and by it is the room in which his faithful sailor, murdered with the Imperial family, always slept. Then there is a small cupboard lined with glass cases, in which are displayed all the uniforms the child wore, for he

was colonel of a dozen regiments, not one of which came forward to aid him in his hour of need. The uniforms of the Grand Duchesses are also on view.

The rooms open one into the other, each telling of a different phase in the life and education of the future Emperor, who was not to be. There is the room where the doctor on duty always slept, and another where his French tutor lived, and a larger one with a cinema screen. "Here," says our guide, "the Tsarevitch used to entertain all his domestics with cinema shows, which he gave himself." The next room resembles a torture chamber, for it contains every kind of surgical instrument and complete encasements for the legs, arms, and body made of canvas and leather. They are the proofs of the terrible malady from which he suffered and of the urgent steps which had frequently to be taken to keep him alive.

At the end of the corridor is a fair-sized room packed with every conceivable kind of toy. Engines, motor-cars, mechanical toys, boxes of bricks, dolls, everything calculated to delight the heart of a child. A huge yellow Teddy bear stands on guard near the door. "That," says your chaperone, "is the last present ever sent to the Tsarevitch by the Kaiser." You gaze for some time spellbound by this children's fairyland. Then you pass out. The tragic pilgrimage is at an end.

Once again in the hall, the attendant hands you a visitors' book and says: "Please sign your name and write a few words of comment on your visit." As you cannot write what you really feel you merely sign. You have paid your last mark of respect to a dynasty that is no more. You have signed a dead Emperor's visiting-book. You hasten

to leave this, the most melancholy spot on earth, and pass out into the fresher air of the Park.

How strange is the Bolshevist psychology. They take great pride in showing the home of the last Tsar. Yet I know nothing more calculated to give a pleasing picture of domestic bliss ruthlessly shattered than the Alexander Palace. The petty tyrant has already vanished into the dim pages of history, and only the memory of a devoted father surrounded by his happy family remains at Tsarskoe-Selo.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE FUTURE OF RUSSIA

I AM often asked: "What is eventually going to happen in Russia?" It is wise to evade a direct answer because prophecies are dangerous. It seems incredible, however, that the existing conditions can continue indefinitely, and I am convinced that, sooner or later, a palace revolution, within the ranks of the Communist Party, will overturn the old "Die Hard" Revolutionary leaders, and pave the way for a more moderate régime. But when? This is the question which is so difficult to answer. To outward appearances Stalin seems to be as firm in the saddle as ever, and is still busily engaged in eliminating all those whom he considers inimical to his interests. He rules Russia with a rod of iron and, until he is overthrown, dies a natural death, or is assassinated, it is unlikely that we shall see any marked change in the Bolshevist policy.

But the history of most revolutions is the same. It is a game of dog eat dog. Each dog has his day, and is then devoured by one of his rivals. Stalin himself has driven many of the most prominent leaders from office, including Trotsky, Litvinov, and Bukharin, while the head of the State Bank, after an official visit to the United States, preferred to hand back his party ticket to the Embassy in Berlin rather than return to direct

Russian finances. Stalin's day will assuredly come in due course.

Meanwhile Russia remains isolated from the rest of the world, more so than she has been since Peter the Great introduced her to Europe, in spite of telegraph, telephone, express trains and aeroplanes. This is hardly to be wondered at, because the Soviet remains in a perpetual state of warfare with the governments of all other countries. Ostensibly at peace, and duly represented by diplomacy, the Soviet never ceases its underground warfare against its neighbours, in its efforts to destroy the old economic system, with which it is unable to compete in the open markets of the world. There can therefore be no economic or political peace as long as the Bolshevists, bent on foreign proselytism, remain in Russia. In recognized international ethics it is not considered etiquette to intervene in the purely internal affairs of a friendly neighbour. But the Soviet government refuses to subscribe to this time-honoured rule. Diplomatic representation is, therefore, under the circumstances, merely a form of camouflage to conceal open hostility, and to preserve a veneer of peace, which most nations, weary from the world war, are anxious to maintain.

At the first attempt, owing to some unexpected safeguards demanded by the MacDonald Government, the negotiations for the renewal of relations between England and Russia broke down, but influences are now busily at work to smooth over the difficulties. It is safe to say that very shortly Russia will once again be able to establish a mission in our midst, which remains, as ever, the most ardent desire of the Bolshevist leaders. The vast machine

of propaganda is just as active, and is ready to resume work. For the past two years its efforts have been concentrated on our possessions in Asia, as our home front has been closed. The Bolshevist leaders have been reluctantly compelled to admit that they have failed to make many converts amongst the peoples of western and central Europe, but they wish to maintain the nuclei of unrest in our midst, as jumping-off points for further efforts, should the opportunity arise.

The steadfast aim of all the Bolshevist chiefs, however much they differ amongst themselves as regards their own internal policy, remains to-day what it has ever been, viz., to smash the British Empire. Since the channel has been closed the innumerable tentacles of subversive propaganda have been thrust forward amongst all the peoples in Asia and northern Africa in whom we are interested. The Bolshevists, unable to convert old Europe to Communism, would now be content if they could obtain complete dominion over all the Asiatic peoples. It has been their dream, since their break-down in western and central Europe, to establish a solid red " bloc " from White Russia to the Sea of Japan ; from the Arctic Circle to the Indian Ocean. They visualize an All Asiatic Congress of Soviet Republics sitting in the St. Andrews Hall, within the red walls of the Kremlin.

Up to the present this dream has failed to materialize; and every day it appears more unlikely to become a reality. The numerous Asiatic tribes have not taken kindly to the new creed as was confidently expected ; the Soviet leaders have succeeded in fermenting troubles in every country to which they have despatched their agents, but no wholesale

conversion of the masses has followed. The failure in China has been the severest check to Communism. The Bolshevists were frankly astonished and hurt at Chinese ingratitude, which brought about the complete failure of the Borodin-Chen mission during the advance of the Cantonese on the Yiangtse Kiang in 1927. Borodin directed the political department of the Cantonese government; Red officers took charge of the operations of the armies; and Soviet money supplied the sinews of war. But just when the subjugation of China seemed within their grasp, the cup was dashed from their lips. The more moderate section of the Cantonese, under Chiang Kai Shek, who had long been groaning under the tyranny and insolence of their Russian advisers, split with the extremists and established an independent government at Nanking; while the Reds under Chen and Borodin made Hangkow their capital. Civil war broke out between the parties, and eventually Chen and Borodin were obliged to make their escape back to Russia by crossing the Gobi desert, and reaching Mongolia.

Chang-Tso-Lin, the northern leader, who hated the Bolshevists and who had raided, with such important results, their legation in Peking, was assassinated by Soviet agents. His departure left the Nanking government nominally supreme over most of China. It resolutely refuses to have any dealings with the Soviet; has arrested its diplomatic agents, and has driven out the Russian officials from the Manchurian railway. The two countries have suspended diplomatic representation and are nominally in a state of war.

The Chinese, knowing well that they have the Japanese

armies and world sympathy behind them, have called the Bolshevist bluff, and the latter have been found wanting and unprepared. The Chinese are not formidable fighters. The recent civil wars were not distinguished by a single-bloody battle, and the chief losses and sufferings fell as usual on the civil population. Chinese armies invariably avoid clashing whenever possible, and abandon or sell a sound strategical position rather than fight. Supposing the Soviet armies were left to deal with the Chinese single-handed, there could be little doubt as to who would emerge victorious. Provided they could organize their transport, the Russian armies could sweep through China without encountering any real opposition; but there are many extraneous factors to be considered which bear no relationship to the respective military merit of the troops. The Soviet government has not even attempted to reoccupy the Manchurian railway, or to advance on Harbin, and hostilities have been confined to raids across the frontier. This is conclusive proof that the Soviet is anxious to avoid hostilities, even at the expense of its dignity. The reasons are not far to seek. There is no money to spare in the Treasury, transport is lacking, there are not sufficient railway trucks to move the troops east, and the limited number available are required to move grain from Siberia to those districts in Russia which are threatened with famine. The Soviet Executive is not keen to see a Russian general at the head of a victorious army, and dreads the sudden appearance of a popular soldier who may turn himself into a dictator; internal disorders have constantly to be suppressed, and last, but not least, there looms in the background the shadow of Japan.

This non-bellicose attitude towards its neighbours, even when confronted with a *casus belli*, may not endure for ever, but it is likely to remain the fixed policy of the government, as long as they are faced with economic and financial difficulties. We are very unlikely to see Russia in an aggressive mood until the Five Years Scheme for the reconstruction of agriculture has succeeded or failed. Russia cannot go to war on a grand scale until a sufficient grain reserve has been accumulated, so that the Siberian railway can be kept clear for the transport of troops. She is almost insolvent judged by western standards, and cannot afford to spend a penny on military operations as long as her exports fail to balance imports, and she is obliged to import wheat, and export gold, to pay for it. Under these circumstances it is very unlikely that the present Russo-Chinese dispute, which is nothing but the Oriental struggle to throw off Communism, is likely to develop into a serious war. There have been some skirmishes and much big talk, but as neither side wants to fight, both will continue to growl across the frontier, until they come to some agreement.

Amongst all other Asiatic races, India, Persia and Afghanistan, it would not appear that Communism has met with success, in any way commensurate with the huge sums of money which have been spent on propaganda and in fermenting unrest. In fact, it would appear that the tide has definitely turned against Bolshevism throughout southern and eastern Asia, just as it has definitely turned against it in Europe. The propaganda has ceased to attract because the benefits promised never came to fruition, and the miserable conditions under which the

mass of the Russian people live, are now too generally known. Until the Bolshevists can produce some definite proofs that their economic theories can bring greater blessings to the masses than capitalism, Asiatic peoples prefer the old system, even with its manifold defects, rather than forge heavier shackles for their own captivity.

The Soviet leaders naturally find it difficult to convert alien Asiatic races to their political and economic creeds and moral codes—the latter involves the uprooting of the faiths which the Asiatic tribes hold so dear, and the substitution of atheism in their place—when they have dismally failed to induce their own nationals to accept their doctrines. Ninety-five per cent of the Russian people will have nothing to do with Communism. They are, for the time being, securely tied to the Juggernaut of Bolshevism by an iron tyranny the most efficient the world has probably ever known, but they are not throwing themselves under the wheels of the Sacrificial Car in an ecstasy of fanatical devotion or spirit of willing sacrifice. The peoples of Asia can hardly be expected to immolate themselves, when they find the Russian peasants absolutely decline to do so. If they cannot convert their own people, even with the entire machinery of pitiless persecution and incessant propaganda in their hands, the Soviet leaders should now realize it is impossible to win over hordes of Chinese, Afghans, Indians and Arabs.

But the Soviet, if it cannot successfully proselytize, is out to ruin the financial stability of its neighbours, and will lose no effort to smash capitalism, because the leaders believe, and quite rightly, that the germs of Bolshevism

can only thrive amidst chaos and poverty. The failure to destroy capitalism, and to start on a level basis all round, has brought Communism to a crisis which cannot be surmounted.

Communism is in fact now bottled up and confined to Russia and Siberia, and is surrounded on all sides, except in the frozen north, by a ring of hostile neighbours. This is the despair of the leaders. Each year they become more and more like the bull in the Coreda, who charges at every person in turn, and seeks in vain some means of egress from this cruel confinement. As the bull becomes weaker after each charge, so do the Bolshevists weaken after each failure to convert their neighbours.

The huge unwieldy Soviet Empire, ruled by a powerful hierarchy in Moscow, backed by a gigantic bureaucracy, has an outward appearance of solidarity and strength, but in reality it is very fragile, if one looks beneath the outer walls to the foundations. The bonds which bind the Russian people are forged in steel, but if one of them were suddenly to snap, it is highly probable that the whole edifice of Bolshevism would collapse like a pack of cards. If the Kremlin fell to-morrow, and the Big Nine were swept away by a counter-revolution, the whole executive administration of Russia would go to pieces. Any government which succeeds the Soviet will have to march warily in order not to destroy more of the existing machinery than is absolutely necessary, otherwise it will have to rebuild the entire administrative system, a gigantic undertaking which will take years to accomplish. If the central machinery of government suddenly collapses in Moscow, Russia will assuredly dissolve

into a number of independent states, each of which will select its own leaders and peculiar form of government. They will be obliged to do this in self-preservation because they will be faced with famine, bankruptcy, and a complete breakdown of the railways, and lines of communication. The component parts of the old Empire may eventually be welded together again, but hardly in our time.

Cut off from free intercourse with Europe, and falling day by day in the social scale, from misery, poverty and tyranny, the Russian people are rapidly losing their former veneer of western culture, and are sinking back into poverty-stricken Asiatic peasant communities. Years must elapse before the ravages and anarchy created by Bolshevism are made good.

A sudden upheaval which swept away the entire Communist Hierarchy and Bureaucracy, would bring about the gravest of all crises at the present time, when the country is faced with insolvency, famine and industrial chaos. The strength of the Communist Party lies, not in its creed, but in the fact that within its ranks are found the only class who understands anything about government and administration. There is no other governing class left in Russia, and conditions of life are such, that no individual, outside of the ranks of the party, whatever his outstanding abilities, can possibly obtain any practical training in finance, industry or departmental administration. There are undoubtedly just as good brains in Russia as are found in other countries, but apart from the Communist Bureaucracy, they are employed on jobs in no way commensurate with their intelligence, and their natural development is stunted.

A man who, under normal conditions, might be a Cabinet Minister, a professor, or a captain of industry, is only too pleased to work in a factory, as long as he can obtain a wage, however small, from the government, which will keep him and his family from starvation and begging in the streets.

I know, for instance, of a pencil factory in Moscow run by a foreigner with considerable success—because the demand for pencils amounts to a famine—where wages are nearly a hundred per cent. higher than those paid in the two government-run pencil factories. Yet owing to efficient private management the profits are far higher. Places on the benches are eagerly sought after by men and women who formerly occupied distinguished social and administrative positions. Professors, authors, generals, former captains of industry, ex-government officials, and ladies of noble birth, sit side by side at the cutting machines and lead-filling machines, at the trimming and painting plants, and in the packing-rooms, with humble industrial workers. Their only ambition is to sink their individuality, and to destroy all records of their past, in order that they may keep their jobs. Nevertheless the government agents and spies are constantly tracing their lineage and former careers, and insisting on their being turned into the streets to make room for the genuine proletariat.

In the event of a successful counter-revolution against the Bolshevists, this class, their initiative and spirits numbed by years of starvation, misery, and persecution will have lost the necessary confidence, energy and nerve to take over the administration of Russia. We must

therefore look elsewhere for the nuclei of a future governing class.

What of the hundreds of thousands of Russians who have fled to foreign countries? Will they eventually return to Russia, with intellects and imaginations sharpened and kept up to date by long intercourse with western civilizations? It is a notorious fact that a very large percentage of Russian exiles have turned out to be utterly useless in the lands of their adoption, and have lived for years on the charity of the foreigner, or on assistance from those of their compatriots, who have made good. On the other hand, a certain percentage have done well, and have established themselves in responsible positions in Europe and the United States. Experience shows that the average Russian does better in the United States than elsewhere. There he finds a state of society, where there is no sympathy for the idler and slacker who has suddenly fallen on grave misfortune after having been accustomed to a life of ease on unearned increment in his home land. The Russians are obliged to work in the United States, or else go to the wall.

Numbers are doing extremely well, and should be a great asset to their country in the future, when the old revolutionary leaders have passed away, and have been succeeded by men of saner views, and a wider outlook.

I can see no possible change which will not throw the administration of Russia into complete chaos, and lead to the partition of the country into a number of semi-independent states, except a gradual revolution within the ranks of the Communist Party itself. For many years to come the trained officials who have been exclusively

engaged in carrying on the machinery, not only of government, but of industry as well, will be indispensable to any executive of any shade of political opinion, which succeeds Stalin and Co. Then if the gates of Russia are once again thrown open to the exiles, and the latter return in large numbers, as they are sure to do—for such is the love of the Russian for his native land—this fusion of a new generation trained in western methods, who have acquired western culture, with the highly trained official class who have served the Bolshevist regime for so many years, must provide the future governing class.

It is easy to foresee what would happen if Stalin and the old " Die Hards " were kicked out to-morrow. The vast majority of the Bolshevist Bureaucracy would throw themselves at the feet of the new Hierarchy, declare they had never been Bolshevists at heart ; had only been compelled to work with them by *force majeure* to escape imprisonment and starvation ; and that they had always prayed for this day of release. They would then beg, with tears in their eyes, to be allowed to remain at those posts, where their experience in the past would enable them to be of the greatest service to the new Executive. There are hundreds of thousands of younger Communists, especially amongst the Jews, who would change their label of political faith with the greatest delight, and without a qualm of conscience.

It is well known that the organizers and leaders of the G.P.U. were chiefly drawn from the ranks of the old Tsarist police and Secret Service agents. They would be quite willing to turn their coats once again, and willing to serve under a new government, with different ideals and

economic principles, just as long as they could keep their jobs and save their skins. The military forces of the G.P.U. would naturally follow the lead of their chiefs, once the latter realized the tide had turned. The rank and file of revolutions are ever ready to set their sails to meet every changing breeze of public opinion.

But any new Russian government must eliminate all idea of wholesale revenge. Many of the Bolshevist leaders will have to run to cover, or else face certain death, but you cannot destroy half a million officials who have carried on the government of the country for eleven years—and are still in office—without dislocating the whole machinery of administration which is essential to any government of whatever political complexion.

Millions in Russia are looking forward to their hour of release from the horrible red bonds I have attempted to describe in this book. What a day of rejoicing there will be throughout the land when the Bolshevists are driven from power, or are succeeded by a régime which will grant equal rights, and guarantee personal liberty to all! Thousands and thousands who belonged to the Aristocracy and Middle Classes in the Tsarist days have deliberately sunk their identity, and are now lost amongst the dregs of the population, through fear of the hatred and reprisals of their task-masters.

Imagine what it will mean to them to creep forth once again from their miserable hovels, and look their fellow creatures in the face, without fear of arrest, imprisonment, exile and death. Think of the joy of return of hundreds of thousands who have been imprisoned or exiled in Siberia; of the pleasure of being a free man or a free woman, and no

longer a card-indexed slave; of the relief of being really able to call your home your own without the constant dread of being turned into the street to make way for a true Communist; of the comfort of being allowed just a little more space over and above the present official six square metres, and to be no longer compelled to share a common kitchen and offices with a dozen other families; of how calm the nights will seem when the "Black Crows" no longer dash past your windows in the silent hours, with their loads of wretched victims; of the relief when it will no longer be necessary to stand in queues on a freezing winter's morn to obtain your share of the bare necessities of life; of how wonderful it will be when those prison doors, the frontiers of your native land, are thrown open and you can revisit your friends in distant lands, or welcome them on the threshold of your own home; of the novelty of being able to write letters once again, and place them in the post knowing they will be delivered to the address on the envelope, and not to the G.P.U.; of being able to see whom you like, and talk with whom you like without a spy constantly at your elbow; of the pride of being able to choose your own profession and rise in it according to the just measure of your natural abilities; of the happiness of reunion with relatives and friends, who have been dead to you for years; of that hour when you can no longer be spirited away, imprisoned, exiled or shot, without your next of kin daring even to enquire what has become of you. Hundreds of thousands of Russians are thinking of that great day when these things—unfulfilled dreams at present—will come to pass.

But what a gigantic task lies ahead of those on whom

will eventually fall the burden of reconstructing the government, and recasting social life in Russia. It will take years to accomplish, and it will be impossible to satisfy five per cent. of the legitimate demands of a hundred and fifty million slaves suddenly restored to liberty. The disappointment and disillusionment will be great, but there can be no return to the Russia of pre-revolutionary days.

Identities of most families have been lost or deliberately destroyed in this red maelstrom which has swept through the land ; title-deeds to all properties have been confiscated and burnt ; marriage, birth and death certificates have been destroyed or lost ; every scrap of movable property has changed hands over and over again ; all private works of art have been expropriated by the State, and have been sold abroad, or now repose in State Museums ; jewels, gold, silver, and share certificates have all been seized. Hardly anyone in Russia to-day owns anything they could really prove to be their own. The entire property of the Church —except the bare walls of the sacred buildings—has been confiscated by the State, and the Greek Orthodox Church will have to be re-endowed by the faithful, and meanwhile supported by the State.

The road will be long and hard for the Russian people, even when they are released from the Communist bondage. But few will ever know their old homes or old lands again, for few will be able to produce their title-deeds, and each individual will be compelled to start at the bottom-most rung of the ladder to rebuild his lost fortune. But the joys of freedom, and the release from the soul-destroying slavery under which they now struggle for the bare right

to live, will be ample compensation for the majority, and restore to them that measure of hope and renewed confidence which will be the foundation on which a new Russia will arise from the dismal heaps of rubbish and ashes to which she has been reduced by the Bolshevist regime.

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